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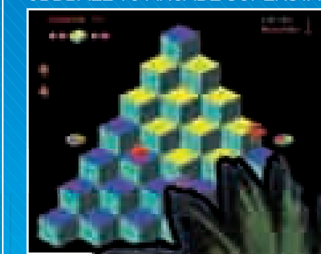
THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

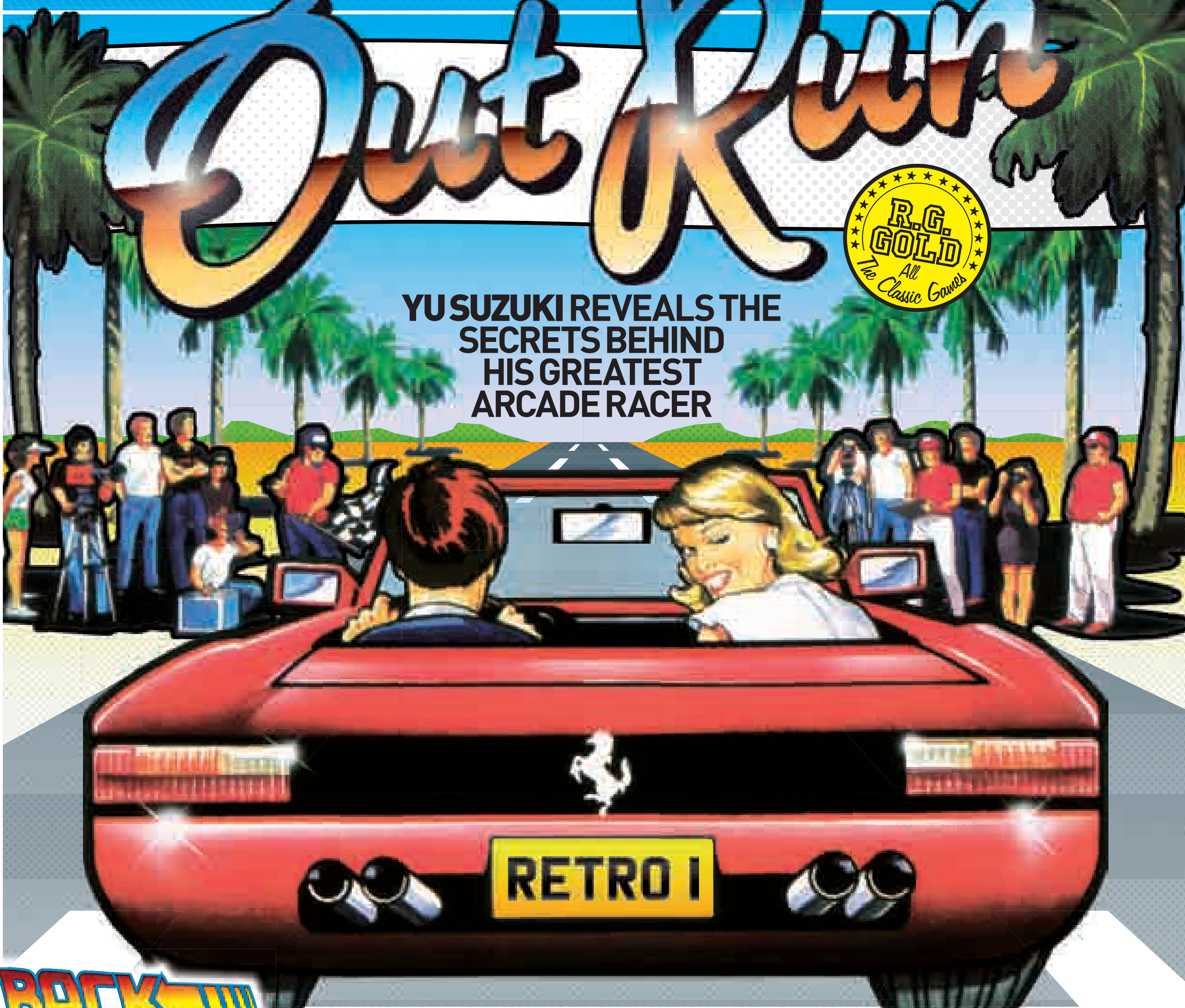
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ALL NEW!
JOIN THE RETRO GAMER COMMUNITY TO UPLOAD CLASSIC GAME PROFILES
RETROGAMER.NET

THE MAKING OF...
Q*bert
FROM A SWEARING ODDBALL TO ARCADE SUPERSTAR





YU SUZUKI REVEALS THE SECRETS BEHIND HIS GREATEST ARCADE RACER

BACK TO THE EIGHTIES
YOUR ONE-STOP NOSTALGIC GUIDE TO GAMING'S GREATEST EVER DECADE

IN THIS ISSUE OF RETRO GAMER

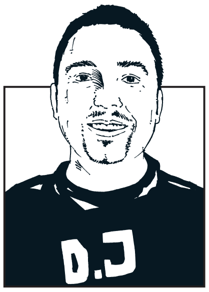
CANNON FODDER
JON HARE ON HOW HIS CLASSIC MILITARY RTS MADE WAR FUN

DONKEY KONG
WHY MIYAMOTO'S PLATFORMER IS THE GREATEST ARCADE GAME OF ALL TIME

INTELLIVISION
HOW MATTEL'S 8-BIT CONSOLE WAS MORE THAN A MATCH FOR THE 2600

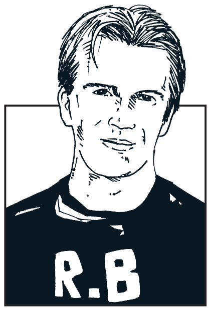
THE RETROBATES

FAVOURITE OUTRUN GAME



DARRAN JONES

My PSP version of *OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast* goes everywhere with me. It's not only the greatest version of *OutRun*, but easily the best racer I've ever played. Nice one Sumo.
Expertise: Carrying chips for Archer MacLean
Currently playing:
Dungeons & Dragons Miniatures
Favourite game of all time:
Robotron: 2084



RICHARD BURTON

For the full Eighties *OutRun* experience you have to play the juddering hydraulic version of the original arcade game, which, for me, can be summed up in three words; *Magical Sound Shower.*
Expertise:
Stuff and nonsense
Currently playing:
Slap Fight
Favourite game of all time:
Manic Miner



STUART HUNT

My favourite *OutRun* game has to be the Xbox port of *OutRun 2*. Sumo did a fantastic job converting the arcade game to the machine and adding unlockable *Scud Race* tracks merely sealed the deal for me.
Expertise:
Games with flying bits in them
Currently playing:
Ghouls 'N Ghosts
Favourite game of all time:
Ghouls 'N Ghosts



CRAIG GRANNELL

OutRun 2 gave us what *OutRun* should have been to start with – good-looking *and* fun. *OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast* took things further, resulting in a near-perfect arcade racer.
Expertise:
Games you don't need 37 fingers to control
Currently playing:
War! Never been so much fun!
Civilization Revolution on DS
Favourite game of all time:
H.E.R.O.



PAUL DRURY

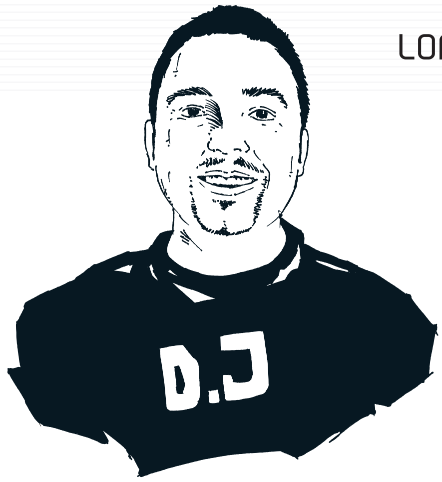
OutRun 2. The elegant branching structure of the original updated with such a skilful and loving hand. It made the arcade essential again, at least for a while.
Expertise: Getting old programmers to confess their drug habits
Currently playing:
Lego Indiana Jones
Favourite game of all time:
Sheep In Space



MIKE TOOLEY

OutRun 2. Bringing the lost art of powerslides back to the masses. Challenge modes were excellent, online racing was impeccable, but it was nothing compared to driving a GTO around the *Daytona* and *Scud Race* tracks.
Expertise: Games that few have heard of and less have played
Currently playing:
Lost Odyssey
Favourite game of all time:
Mr. Do!

LOADING...



It's been just a day since I arrived back from Retro Fusion '08 and a number of different emotions are currently coursing through me. I'm feeling exhausted, yet also elated and rather sad.

I'm exhausted because I've had little sleep since the previous Thursday; I'm elated because it's amazing to see and meet so many individuals with a genuine love for our hobby; and I'm a little sad because it's probably going to be another year until we have something similar to look forward to.

While I was able to catch up with the likes of Archer MacLean, Wil Overton, Sandy White, Ste Pickford, Alex Trowers, Andy Nuttal and Martin Hollis, the real treat was meeting many of **Retro Gamer**'s readers and discovering that their love for the mag is as strong as ever.

You get a real sense of community from speaking to the likes of Kenz, SirClive, Sscott and JetSetWilly – to name just a few of the lovely readers I met – and it's clear to see that they're as passionate about the magazine as I am. As eager as these readers were, however, even they paled in comparison to the sheer amount of subscribers and forum members who wanted to see more homebrew coverage within their precious magazine. Let's just say that come a few issues time, some of you are going to be very pleasantly surprised…

Enjoy the magazine





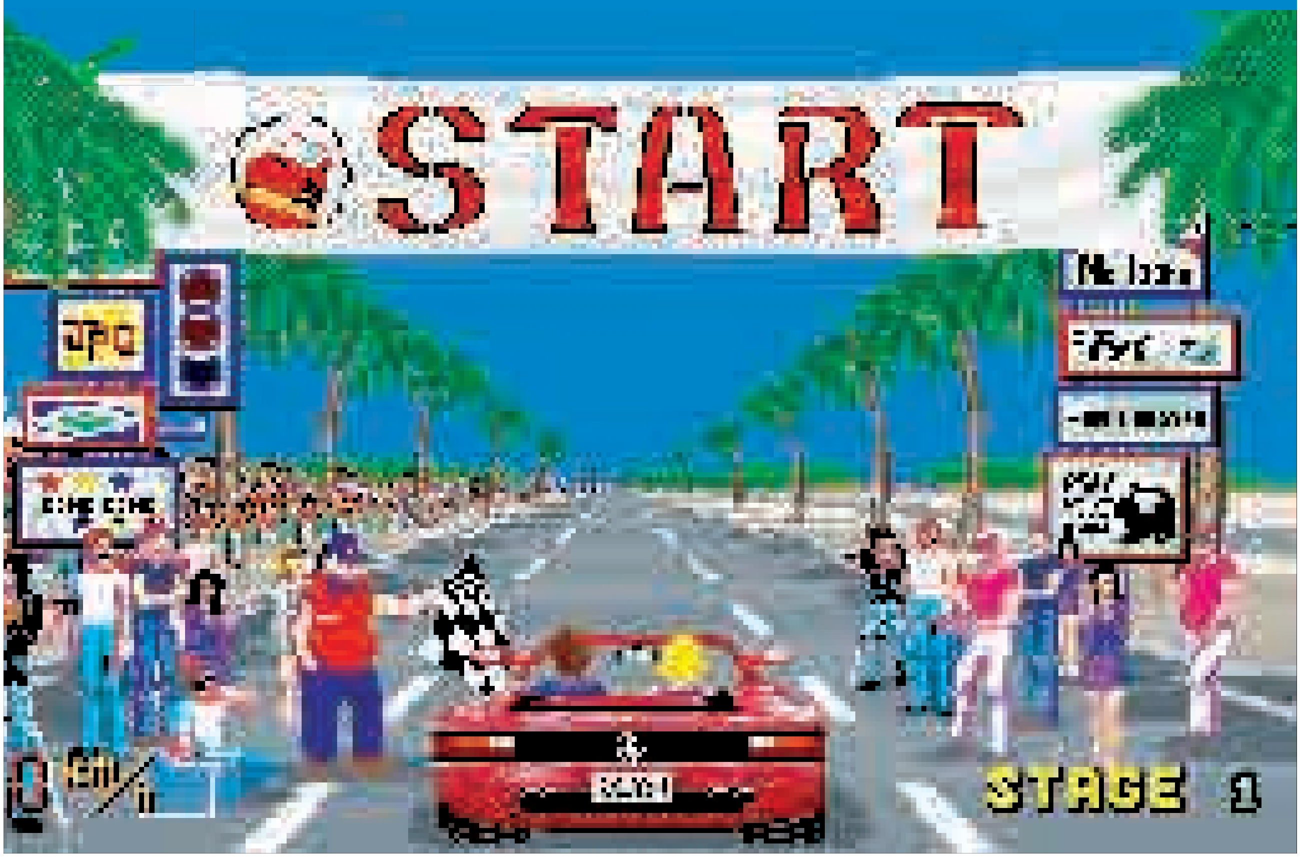




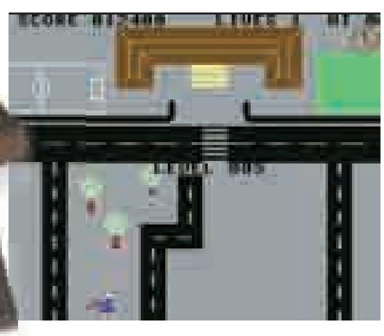
Load 54

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BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO CLASSIC GAMES





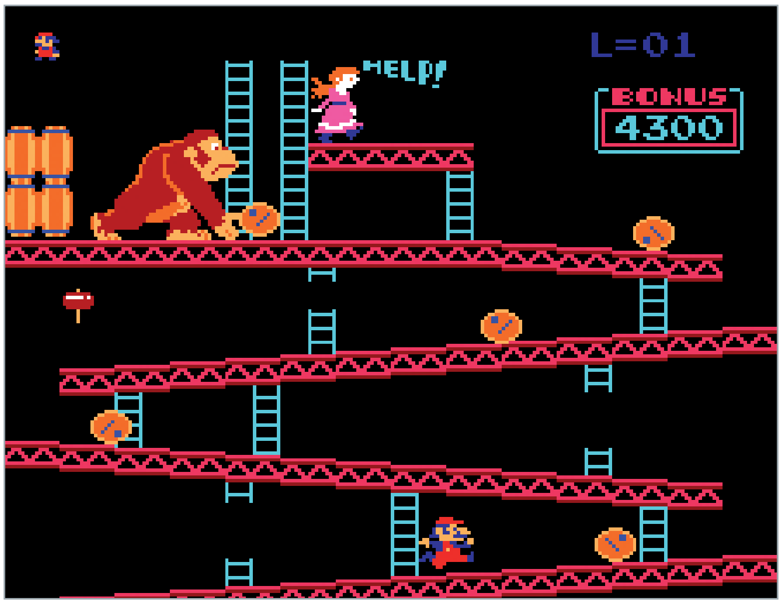




ESSENTIALS

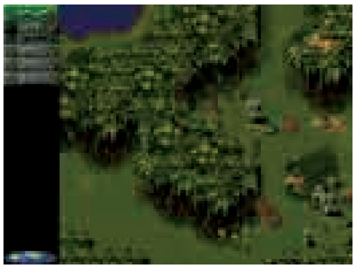
THE GREATEST ARCADE GAMES EVER!

60 WITH SO MANY ARCADE GAMES AVAILABLE IT WAS VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO CHOOSE ALL OF OUR FAVOURITES. THAT DIDN'T STOP US FROM GIVING IT A GOOD GO THOUGH...



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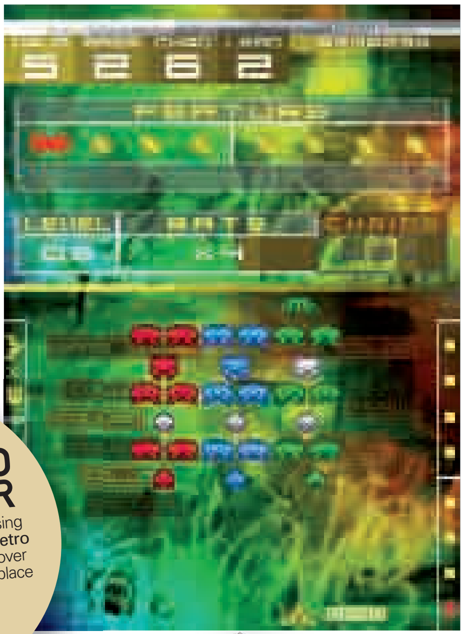


RETRO RATED



THE GAMES LISTING...

If it's a bumper compilation or a great new remake, then Retro Rated is where you'll find it





THE MAKING OF...

Q*BERT

70 Discover how an orange blob with a penchant for swearing and isometric levels hit the arcade big time.



ARCADE INSPECTION

NEO-GEO MVS

76 It's one of the oldest running arcade boards of all time and launched SNK into the big leagues. Meet the MVS.

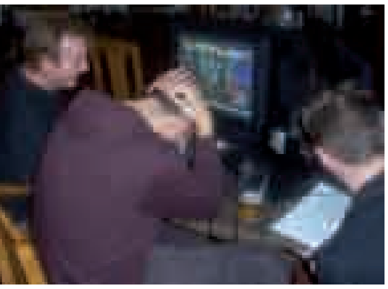


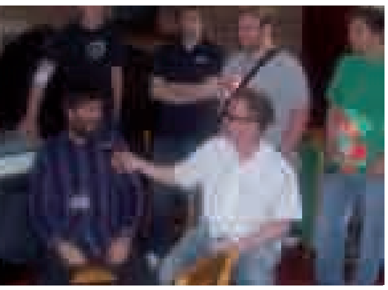
THE MAKING OF...

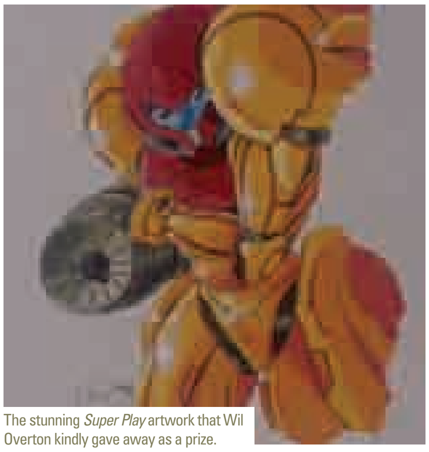
NEW TRACK & FIELD

84 Pat Phelan of Sumo Digital explains how the company resurrected Konami's classic for a brand new audience.









The stunning *Super Play* artwork that Wil Overton kindly gave away as a prize.





So many machines, so little time… We'd be lying if we said we played them all.



RETRO FUSION '08: THE REPORT

RETRO GAMER'S VERDICT ON THE RETRO EVENT OF THE YEAR

Visiting this year's Retro Fusion event revealed a great many things. *Ant Attack* creator Sandy White is a very nice bloke; the community scene is positively thriving and I'm nowhere near as good at *Radiant Silvergun* as I like to think I am.

Spread across a very pleasant weekend and located just outside Coventry at the Leamington Rugby Football Club, it was a brilliant chance to rub shoulders with a fair few celebrities, play plenty of classic games and meet the very readers who help make **Retro Gamer** such a success.

Organised by Chris Wilkins (who's an old hand at this thanks to previous events like the Retro Ball and Retro Fusion: A Weekend Of Gaming) his latest shindig was easily the best he has put on, with only a few slight niggles causing the occasional upset.

"The forums are good at bringing like-minded people together in one place," he says when we asked him about the constant popularity of these events. "Meeting those contacts you make online face to face is the next step and this is where the events come in. Throw in a bar, some retro consoles and games, a few retro celebrities and some gaming competitions and you have a winning formula!"

As Chris rightly mentions, it's the classic programmers of old that always prove to be the biggest draw at shows such as this and Retro Fusion '08 was no exception. While Sensible Software co-founder Jon Hare was unable to attend due to commitments at E3, and the Oliver Twins were also unavailable, Wilkins was nevertheless able to pull out some very nice surprises.

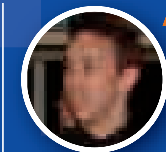
Archer MacLean – now with added beard – was on hand and more than willing to chat to his extremely loyal fan base, while Bullfrog's Alex Trowers and Andy Nuttall not only proved to be amazingly good at *Rock Band*, but often had people in stitches with their unflinching and very honest views about working in the industry. Stories about long-cancelled projects and the early days of Bullfrog were fascinating to listen to, but they pale in comparison to the revelation that is 'Game Tester Space Invaders' – games testers would be forced to move across a wall like the titular invaders while the team took pot shots at them with BB guns. Then there was Sandy White who was

WHAT THE CELEBRITIES THOUGHT OF RETRO FUSION



Wil Overton

Why do you think these events are so popular?
Probably because a) there aren't that many of them and b) that they're small enough that they create a real sense of community. Everybody tends to know (even if it's only by forum posts) everyone else. I heard mention, more than a few times, how it worked because of the friendly atmosphere.
What was your highlight of the show?
'Stuff'-wise it had to be the little custom MAME setup that looked, for the entire world, like a midget arcade cab. Normally I find emulation on a normal PC very sterile and uninvolving but this was fantastic and I coveted it all day. Other than that it was just being able to chat to people; not just the guests, but anyone who'd listen. It's not often you get to gab in real life to people who are as interested in this stuff as you are. Hope I didn't bore anyone.
What one game did you discover and enjoy?
In the end I didn't actually get to play that much but I rediscovered *Space Invaders* mainly by realising what a different experience it is playing on a proper, full-sized machine. All those years came flooding back



Alex Trowers

Why do you think these events are so popular?
Everyone loves thinking about their childhood as it's always done through rose-tinted specs. Having like-minded people who join in with you when you start expounding the virtues of a particularly obscure title that you remember liking is excellent and exceptionally unlikely to happen in day-to-day life. On a more cynical note, those games were all built on gameplay mechanics and making them fun to play rather than nice to look at. As such, they're still playable to this day.
What was your highlight of the show?
Probably at the end of the evening, playing *Rock Band* with *3D Ant Attack* creator, Sandy White. I'm guessing there are not many people who can say that.
What game did you discover and enjoy?
Well, it wasn't so much discover as rediscover. *Time Pilot '84*. It's the game that kept us sane when we were making *Gene Wars* and to be stood there with Nutts, trying to beat each other's score, had the memories flooding back.
How does it feel being surrounded by so many people who enjoy your work?
Awesome. Call it ego if you will, but I do this for the acclaim, not the money. The biggest kick you can get in this industry is when you go into a shop and see your game on the shelf. Then some kid comes along, picks it up and says to his mate, "Get this – it's really good."



Sandy White

Why do you think these events are so popular?
I guess its a good excuse for like-minded folk to meet and be sociable… and old computers will always be attractive in the same way as old steam engines are… a nostalgic reminder of our past.
What was your highlight of the show?
It was the many interesting conversations and the warm welcome from so many friendly people, which has left the lasting impression
What game did you discover and enjoy?
It has to be the one that was playing on the big screen with the drum kit etc… *Rock Band*?
How does it feel being surrounded by so many people who enjoy your work?
It's the first time I've attended an event quite like this, so truly surprised and a bit bemused at first if I'm to be honest, but I think I got into the swing of it eventually. Driving back to my home at two in the morning afterwards I had a full heart – if that doesn't sound too soppy – and I was thinking that the dawn of the age of home computing in the early Eighties must have been, in a certain way, an emotional time for every one of us, a discovery of new worlds hidden inside little plastic boxes which plugged into our TVs, and a kind of unbounded excitement and optimism that the world was about to change forever… it seems *Ant Attack* played its own little part and I am truly grateful for the very kind words people have for it even 25 years on…



Ste Pickford

Why do you think these events are popular?
I'm baffled to be honest.
What was the highlight of the show for you?
I love seeing all the new stuff people are doing with old hardware. People who've written new games for the C64, or upgraded an old 8-bit computer to have several megabytes of RAM.
How does it feel meeting so many people who genuinely love your work?
It's odd! It's lovely too. It's a little taste of fame. Everyone is so nice and friendly.
What was it like going over your career?
I'm not so keen on that bit. I see a big chunk of my career as being characterised by missed opportunities. The reason John and I went indie was to be able to make great games without constant interference. Looking over my career, every other game that popped up sparked a memory of how the game was going to be so much better than it ended up, but publisher X made us add this rubbish feature, or publisher Y made us cut this great bit out.
What was the highlight of the show?
I managed to say hello and shake the hand of Sandy White. He was an inspiration to me, and I'm glad I managed to tell him that.
Did you rediscover a classic game there?
It was the first time I'd ever seen the famous eight-player *Bomberman* on the Saturn. That looked a lot of fun.



Organiser Chris Wilkins (middle) poses with forum members Turrican (left) and Kenz.

initially bemused by all the attention and adoration he was receiving, but soon got into the swing of things and ended up staying until the early hours of Saturday morning and could often be seen chin-wagging with Archer MacLean, Simon Goodwin (ex-*Crash* writer, and now principal programmer at Codemasters) as well as many, clearly starstruck fans.

Special mention, however, has to go to regular **Retro Gamer** freelancer Paul Drury who interviewed both Ste Pickford and *GoldenEye*'s project leader Martin Hollis and had the crowd in stitches thanks to some amusing questions and a string of embarrassing photos featuring the two gaming legends.

Although the big names were obviously a huge draw for a great many of the people that attended, the many games that were on offer also proved to be extremely popular as well. Arcade cabinets on offer included a massive *Simpsons* cabinet, and a mint *Space Invaders* and *Pac-Man* cabinet, the latter lent by the Oliver Twins as they were unable to be at the event in person – while there were a selection of MAME cabinets available that enabled gamers access to plenty of classic games.

While the arcade machines put in a good showing, it was the sheer amount of different systems on offer that really managed to impress. The very people who visited the show supplied many of the machines available for use and it's a testament to everybody who attended that everything was well looked after and didn't go missing at the end of the show.

Indeed, we'd think twice about taking something like a Vectrex or Virtua Boy to the show, but that didn't stop forum regular SirClive, otherwise known as Gordon Sinclair, taking his own personal machines along. "I attended last year's Retro North and was amazed at how trusting everyone is, so that experience meant I was quite comfortable bringing my own machines along. There were more children this time though and I did have a scare with the Virtual Boy when someone tried to put a cart in the wrong way and jammed the protective cover, but no harm was thankfully done."

Along with rare machines like the aforementioned Vectrex and Virtua Boy, other delights included an Atari 8-bit and a copy of the brilliant homebrew game *Yoomp!*. "Seeing the Specadore [a Commodore 64 hybrid] was quite a shock to see, but I'm pleased to say that I've rekindled my love for the 3DO," reveals Barnaby Whattingham (or ZeroCipher as he's known on the forums) when we asked him about his favourite machine that was at the event "I also enjoyed some of the homebrew games that were on offer, particularly *Co-Axis*, which was on the Commodore 64."

Interestingly, the homebrew games grew a surprising amount of interest from the crowds with an equal number of visitors being amazed and bemused by the popular scene. "The homebrew scene hasn't been this active since 1994!" revealed a happy Vinny Mainolfi (VinnyM on the forums). "It's truly exciting to see people like Jon Wells, Richard Bayliss, Jonathan Cauldwell and Jason Kelk releasing quality products that would have sold thousands back in the days."

If homebrew gaming wasn't your thing there was still plenty of great games to revisit including *Manic Miner*, *Sonic The Hedgehog*, *Super Mario Kart* and many, many more. In fact, with so many people bringing a selection of games down with them and the abundance of MAME cabinets available it was impossible to walk from one end of the show to the other without discovering completely new games each time.

Retro Fusion '08 may have suffered from a few niggling problems – the location was a little on the small side and the PA system was far from perfect – but that didn't stop it from being a fantastic weekend that delivered on every promise it initially made.

"I have organised three events now over the last few years and can honestly say I have been bitten by the bug," continues Wilkins. "Without committing to anything specific, I think the **RG** readers can assume there will be another event – just not sure when at this time."

One's thing for certain, we won't be missing it for the world. (Special thanks to Paul Drury and Mark Ambrose for supplying additional photography.)

THE FORUM SPEAKS

ID: OVERHEAT
It was great to meet people from the forum and also to chat with others about our common passion. Loved playing on games and consoles that I otherwise wouldn't have been able to, and also participating in ten-player *Bomberman* – a unique experience.

ID: WOODY.COOL
Filling my pockets (and emptying my wallet) with lots of stuff that my mates refer to as 'old crap' but I refer to as 'treasure'. Playing lots of excellent games with like-minded people who have the same love for retro that I have.

ID: KENZ
The great fun I had running the compos on my Speccy 128 and Specadore 64 – and all the great reactions to the Specadore 64!

ID: WITCHFINDER
The venue was a bit small and the PA struggled during the Q&As but these are minor niggles.

ID: SSCOTT
How friendly and approachable the guest stars were and also Darran, who I was wittering onto at five past midnight about issue 50! The one-on-one competitions of *SFII*, *Sensi*, *Typing Of The Dead* and *Doom* worked well for me.

ID: PSJ3809
Only criticism is there's not another one happening for ages!

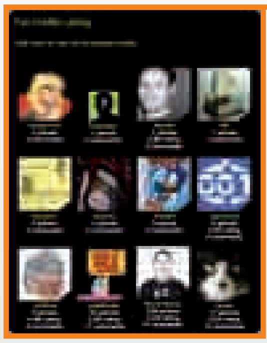
CALLING ALL RETROBATES

UNVEILING RETRO GAMER'S BRAND NEW WEBSITE

If there's one thing we're proud of at Retro Gamer, it's the amount of enthusiasm, respect, and, dare we say it, love that the magazine constantly receives. A weekend's visit to Retro Fusion and having to sign countless copies of issue 50 was proof of that. Ultimately, Retro Gamer wouldn't be the mag it is today without the support of its loyal readership, so we wanted to look at how we could give a little something back to you all; a way of feeling like you belong to this great little community we've created both within RG's pages and online.

So allow us to introduce an all-new look for the **Retro Gamer** website and a chance for you to interact with both the magazine and fellow readers like never before. In addition to the now infamous forum – visit www.retrogamer.net/forum if you've not joined already; and blog – blog.retrogamer.net; and online bargain hunt – www.retrogamer.net/bargain_hunt.php – it's now possible to upload your profiles of your favourite videogames. You don't have to be an amazing writer, you don't have to have a specialised knowledge; you just have to have a passion for games. By uploading your favourite titles, you'll be part of the rapidly growing **Retro Gamer** community and will be able to discover the likes and dislikes of fellow readers.

So without further ado, let's walk you through one of the most exciting online databases to appear in ages – one that's created by the community for the community.



■ Sign up, upload your own profile and join the motley crew of Retrobates that are rapidly appearing.

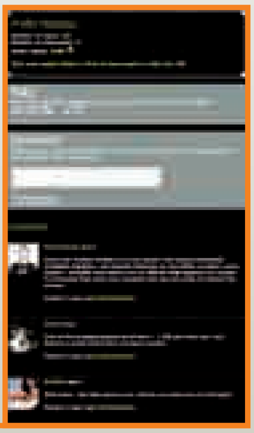


■ Only the best entries will receive this prestigious award, with the best ones going on to possibly appear in the actual magazine.



■ Blogs are great fun and we do what we can to make the **Retro Gamer** blog as humorous as possible. Check it out for daily updates.

■ There's a direct link to our bustling forum and always plenty of great topics to discuss there.



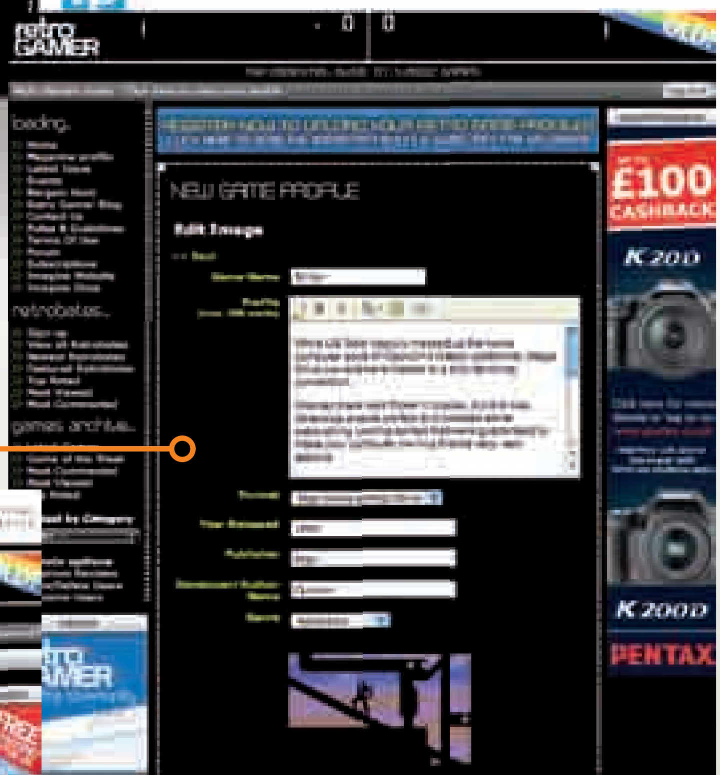
■ It's possible to leave comments and rate every single profile. Get into the community spirit by telling us what you do and don't like about each featured game.



1

Before you can start telling other readers about your love for *Elite* or why *Robotron: 2084* is the best game in the world you're going to need to create a profile. Once this is done you'll be taken to the following screen.

As well as telling every other reader a little bit about yourself, this handy page also tracks a various number of stats and will award you based on everything from how many game profiles you've created to the number of comments they've received.



2

Now it's time to create your game profile. You can cover any game, on any system – the only rule being that you can't cover a title that's already been put up by another reader. You can choose a different system for the game in question, so if someone has written about the arcade version of *Strider*, there's nothing stopping you from writing a profile on the Mega Drive version.

Once your text is written (maximum 350 words), fill in all the blank spaces, upload a single image and voila, you're all finished.

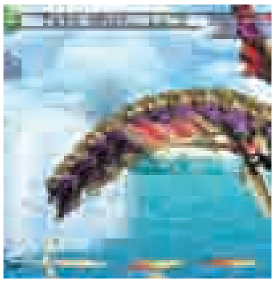


3

Congratulations. Your profile is now part of the community and you're a fully fledged Retrobate. It's important to remember that while anyone can sign up and leave comments or rate the online profiles, your actual profile won't show up until you've added your first game profile. To give you further incentive, there'll even be an opportunity to see your game within the actual magazine, as we'll be printing our favourite profiles.

So what are you waiting for? Head on over to **www.retrogamer.net** and start telling the world about your favourite games. We'll see you there.

LAST-MINUTE NEWS



Thunder Force is on its way back. We haven't been this excited for a long time.

THUNDER IS PARADISE

For a little while now the Tecnosoft website has hinted that a new *Thunder Force* game could be in the pipeline and now the wait is finally over… thanks to our good pals at Sega. *Thunder Force VI*, which was originally destined to appear on the Dreamcast, is retaining *Thunderforce V*'s style, faux-3D visuals and will reputedly be stretched over six stages that will have enemies and bosses that pay homage to the past *Thunder Force* titles. The game is being handled by Sega and its development overseen by Tez Okano of *Segagaga* and *Gunstar Super Heroes* fame. We seriously can't wait for this one, folks.

YET ANOTHER NIGHT IN THE NAMCO MUSEUM

NAMCO TO RELEASE XBOX LIVE MUSEUM COMPILATION

Seriously, don't get us wrong, we love retro games. We love Namco and we love compilation packs, but it does get on our wick when we hear that the game giant is wiping away its milk-tache and looking to again squeeze the raw udders of its classic museum cow for one more glass of milk.

Now don't get us wrong we gave *Namco Museum DS* a respectable 74%, but that's only because it swanked *Pac-Man Vs*. But alas, it would seem someone at Namco actually listened to our pleas and has seen fit to include some actual new retro games on the latest *Museum* pack. No, seriously. *Namco Museum: Virtual Arcade* will contain all the current arcade classics available on Xbox Live, which includes *Ms. Pac-Man, Xevious, Galaga, Dig Dug*, the excellent *Pac-Man Championship Edition* and *Mr. Driller* plus a whole host of new faces including *Motos, Pole Position, Rolling Thunder* and the sublime *Galaga '88* and newly arranged versions of *Pac-Man* and *Dig Dug*.

Also, coming out of E3 was the exciting news that Namco was hoping to re-create the same magic it wielded for *Pac-Man Championship Edition* in the forthcoming Xbox Live release, *Galaga Legions*; a searing-looking update of the classic bleeping shmup, but coated with dazzling hi-res pyrotechnics and tortuous bullet-hell *DonPachi*-type gameplay. Here's a dazzling screenshot to whet your probably now-erect retro gland.



The gorgeous-looking *Galaga Legions*, announced at E3, will be coming to Xbox 360's later this year.

CONGRATULATIONS, IT'S A BOUNCING BABY GRADIUS

KONAMI ANNOUNCES A NEW GRADIUS TITLE FOR THE Wii

Following the news earlier in the month about Capcom looking to go all 8-bit and NES-ified for the look of *Mega Man 9*, Konami now appears to be following suit by recently announcing that it's planning to release a new *Gradius* game that's dripping in 16-bit visuals.

While details about the game itself are a little thin on the ground at the moment, it's believed that *Gradius Rebirth* will be a completely new *Gradius* game drawn in a retro style and not a remake of the original NES game (although that title does seem to say otherwise). Anyway, whatever the outcome we're just pleased more and more developers – particularly in the East – seem to be willing to champion the retro scene in new projects. *Gradius Rebirth* is scheduled to hit WiiWare sometime in the summer.



Like *Mega Man 9*, *Gradius Rebirth* will be arriving with luscious retro visuals.

HERO OF THE MONTH



COOL SPOT

Hero OF THE MONTH
Every month, Retro Gamer looks back at a classic videogame hero or heroine. This month it's the turn of Cool Spot

First appearance: *Cool Spot*
Weapon of choice: Soda bubbles
Most Likely to: Endorse a soft drink
Least likely to: Exfoliate
Unusual fact: The 7 Up bottle that appears in the original US version of the game was omitted from the PAL release.

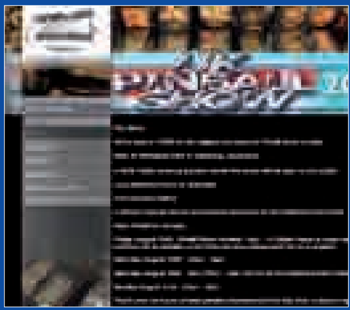
retro GAMER DIARY

THINGS TO LOOK FORWARD TO...

EVENT HOSTING retro GAMER

IF YOU WANT **RETRO GAMER** TO PROMOTE UPCOMING GAMES AND EVENTS, CONTACT US AT RETROGAMER@IMAGINE-PUBLISHING.CO.UK

Just because **Retro Gamer** looks to the past doesn't mean there aren't plenty of games and events to look forward to. Every month we list all the exciting games and events for you to add to your 'to do' list



AUGUST

UK PINBALL SHOW

Dates: 29-31 August

Location: Wicksteed Park, Kettering, Northamptonshire

Admission: £10

Website: http://www.ukpinballshow.co.uk

If you've always fancied yourself as a bit of a pinball wizard then why not head on down to this year's UK Pinball Show? Held at Wicksteed Park in Kettering, Northamptonshire it's promising to be an excellent event with a variety of classic pinball tables to enjoy, and even an awards ceremony. Don't miss it.



AUGUST

BANGAI-O SPIRITS

Released: 29 August

Publisher: D3 Enterprise

Price: £29.99

Format: DS

Look at the above screenshot. Looks brilliant, doesn't it? D3 Enterprise obviously thinks so as it's decided to release Treasure's critically acclaimed DS blaster in the UK. We couldn't be more excited. With plenty of new weapons, moves, and a groovy level designer, *Bangai-O Spirits* looks like it's going to make the excellent N64 and Dreamcast games totally redundant.



AUGUST

SAM & MAX: SEASON 1

Released: 29 August

Publisher: JoWooD

Price: £34.99

Format: Wii

The first six episodes of *Sam & Max*'s triumphant return to the videogame industry will soon be appearing on Nintendo's Wii and very good it's looking too. Extremely funny and with an interface perfectly suited to the Wii's unique controller, Max and Sam's latest adventures prove that the duo have lost none of their crazy appeal and that they're still a force to be reckoned with.



SEPTEMBER

SAMBA DE AMIGO

Released: 05 September

Publisher: Sega

Price: £34.99

Format: Wii

Sadly, we didn't get a chance to play *Samba De Amigo* the last time it was demoed, as we were… well… we can't remember where we were, but it definitely wasn't in the office. Fortunately, Ashley Day was able to play it and he's put any fears we had to rest. The ability to use two remotes sounds like a great boon and with any luck Sega won't skimp on the extra tracks either.



SEPTEMBER

SONIC CHRONICLES: THE DARK BROTHERHOOD

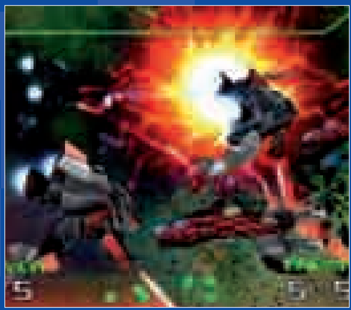
Released: 05 September

Publisher: Sega

Price: £29.99

Format: DS

Apart from its silly name, we can't see how *The Dark Brotherhood* can possibly fail. It features the most popular hedgehog in the world, some gorgeous cel-styled visuals and it's being created by RPG master BioWare. Indeed, such is this developer's skill within the genre that even if it was told to create a bad game on pain of death it would simply be unable to do so.



SEPTEMBER

R-TYPE TACTICS

Released: 12 September

Publisher: Rising Star Games

Price: £34.99

Format: PSP

Now, this is bold. Irem has taken its most beloved franchise – *R-Type,* in case you didn't know – and turned it into an RTS. Worry not though, for while it sounds as sensible as adding an ashtray to a motorcycle, it's actually looking pretty damned good. There's still a while to go before its September release date, but *Tactics* is already looking like an essential addition to the franchise. Now release a proper compilation, Irem.



SEPTEMBER

FINAL FANTASY IV

Released: 29 September

Publisher: Square Enix

Price: £29.99

Format: DS

After the phenomenal success of *Final Fantasy III* on the DS, it should come as no surprise to learn that Square is dusting off the next game in the classic, long-running franchise. Boasting truly stunning visuals and gorgeous new cut-scenes, *Final Fantasy IV* is looking like a great update for anyone who was a fan of the original SNES release. Now where's that proper *Final Fantasy VII* release? Eh Square Enix…



SEPTEMBER

GAUNTLET

Released: September

Publisher: Eidos

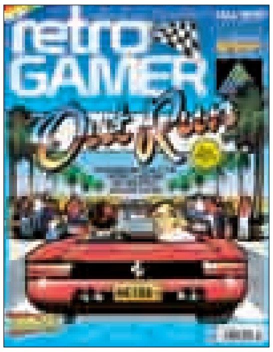
Price: £29.99

Format: DS

From the moment we switched on the DS and listened to the rejigged theme tune, *Gauntlet* had us well and truly under its spell. Using a nifty scaling technique that enables you to quickly pinpoint generators, the ability to play online, not to mention over 40 huge levels to hack and slash through, this latest addition to the very old franchise already has our interest. Expect more info in the coming months.

THE RETRO FORUM

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – WWW.RETROGAMER.NET



CONTACT US

Snail Mail
Retro Gamer
Imagine Publishing
Richmond House
33 Richmond Hill
Bournemouth
Dorset
BH2 6EZ

Email
retrogamer@
imagine-publishing.co.uk

STAR LETTER

AN EDUCATIONAL READ

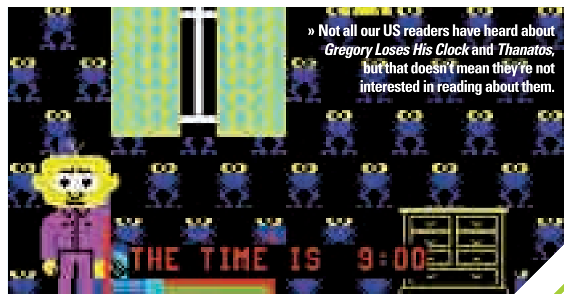
Dear people from far away,
I am writing in response to the letter from Andres in your brilliant *Zelda* issue. I, too, hail from the United States, and I agree that locating your magazine can definitely be a pain in the 'whatever word you Brits use for ass' and has become even more so recently. Luckily, I only pay $8.99 when I do find it, so Andres must be driving to Mexico for his.

The main point I want to make, however, is that what Andres sees as a negative is what I consider your greatest strength. Growing up here, I have never been exposed to such systems as the Amstrad and Spectrum or titles like *Jet Set Willy* and *Head Over Heels* plus many other games and systems that I've never even heard of. However, by reading **Retro Gamer**, which is a well-written, researched, and presented magazine, I can fill in those gaps that I would otherwise remain ignorant to. Basically, I just want to say keep doing what you do.

You see, while reading through this magazine, rather than saying, 'I remember that', I more often say, 'I never knew that', and that's what makes it so great. **Retro Gamer** is educational – and how many magazines can boast that these days? So that's just my two cents, or farthings, or pence, or hogsheads, or whatever you actually use over… there.

Thanks for reading.
Spiders, via email

*Thanks, Spiders. It's fantastic to hear that you're enjoying the magazine from across the ocean. We appreciate that there are going to be a lot of readers out there who specifically want to reminisce about the games they were interested in during their youths, but it's also great to discover that many people like you appear to be just as interested in learning about retro games that they've never heard of. When we relaunched **Retro Gamer**, our main objective was to get people so excited about the games we were featuring that they would actually track them down and play them. The fact that you're discovering new games as well just makes it that little bit more rewarding.*



» Not all our US readers have heard about *Gregory Loses His Clock* and *Thanatos*, but that doesn't mean they're not interested in reading about them.

HOME GLOOM

Dear Retro Gamer,
I'm a huge fan of the homebrew section that appears in the magazine each month. However, I can't help noticing that you only dedicate two single pages to the subject. Are you ashamed of homebrew? Do you feel that it's not worth the additional coverage?

I remember you used to do developer diaries on several games that were being remade, and while I would have preferred that you covered new Spectrum and other 8-bit titles, it was nevertheless a very fascinating read.

I think it's absolutely incredible that, in this age of high-definition gaming and budgets that cost millions, classic titles like *Shoot-'Em-Up Designer* and *Mariano The Dragon* are still getting made by talented individuals, and I find it somewhat tragic that you devote so little space to them.

James Bailey, Portsmouth

You're right, James, it is amazing that decades after a machine's release people are not only still creating games for them, but also often making extremely polished products. We're looking into expanding the homebrew section, but we obviously have to be careful that we don't upset those readers who already feel that two pages is two too many. Your best bet is to visit our forums where a group of readers are currently discussing this very matter.

WHERE'S THE MAGIC?

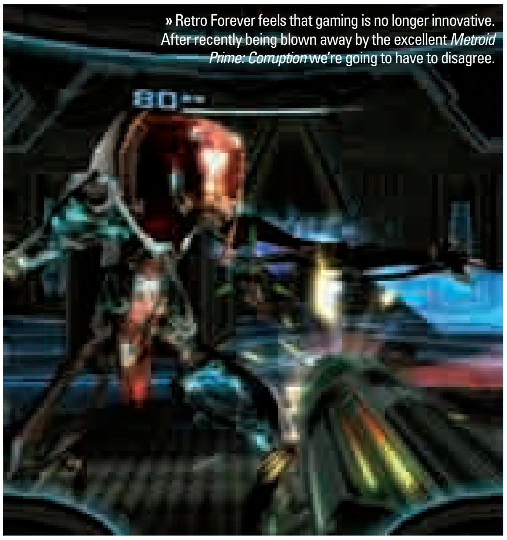
Dear Retro Gamer,
What on earth is happening to our industry? I've been watching the recent E3 feeds, and every single one of the big three has put on a terribly bland performance. Where's the



EVERY MONTH, ONE lucky reader will receive an extremely trendy **Retro Gamer** T-shirt (thankfully, not one worn by Darran) and a snazzy new **Retro Gamer** binder. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls. Failing that, something funny with swear words in it will go down just as well…



» James Bailey wants to see more homebrew reviews on games like *Sirius*, but how many **Retro Gamer** readers agree? Head to the forum and let us know.



» Retro Forever feels that gaming is no longer innovative. After recently being blown away by the excellent *Metroid Prime: Corruption* we're going to have to disagree.

excitement? Why is everyone seemingly content to just rip everybody else off? Why is there no innovation left in our hobby?

I have absolutely no interest in the videogames of today, especially when they consist of a load of pointless sequels and games with guns. There just doesn't seem to be anything worth getting excited about. Long live the Spectrum and prosperity to retro gamers everywhere.

Retro Forever, retro land (actually, via email – Ed)

Sorry, Retro Forever, but we'll have to slightly disagree with you here. While there's no denying that E3 was very lacklustre, innovation within the industry is far from dead. You need only look at Wii and DS for proof of that. And while we admire your undying commitment to old-school gaming, you're missing out on some seriously brilliant games.



From the forum

EVERY MONTH, **RETRO GAMER** ASKS A QUESTION ON THE FORUM AND PRINTS THE BEST REPLIES. THIS MONTH WE WANTED TO KNOW...
YOUR FAVOURITE NEO-GEO GAME?



ID: mohicankid
Neo-Geo? It has to be *Metal Slug*… Any *Metal Slug*. First game I ever played on it and I fell in love instantly.

ID: LeeT
Bit of an obscure choice, but it's *Irritating Maze*.

ID: ColonelK
Magician Lord. I must have spent a good few hundred quid when I was young playing it in a dodgy arcade in Wigan.

ID: Overheat
Only had a Neo-Geo CD, but really enjoyed the *Samurai Shodown* games. They played really well… after waiting days for it to load, anyway.

ID: David
Shock Troopers 2.

ID: sirclive1
Stakes Winner is easily the most addictive horse-racing game ever.

ID: ZeroCipher
I only recently got my hands on the Neo-Geo AES console and two games to play on it. However, I did have the Neo-Geo CD and I loved playing *Samurai Shodown* and *Super Sidekicks*.

ID: Limbrooke
My choice is definitely the punishing *Strikers 1945 Plus*. A very unique (in the world of Psikyo) and challenging reworking of the original *Strikers 1945 II*.

ID: pleccy
It's a predictable answer, but I'm going to go with *Metal Slug*. It has to be the best run-'n'-gun ever made.

ID: Spacepatrol
Last Blade is sublimely beautiful.

ID: chokocat
Waku Waku 7 is a brilliant game. I love the anime style of the characters.

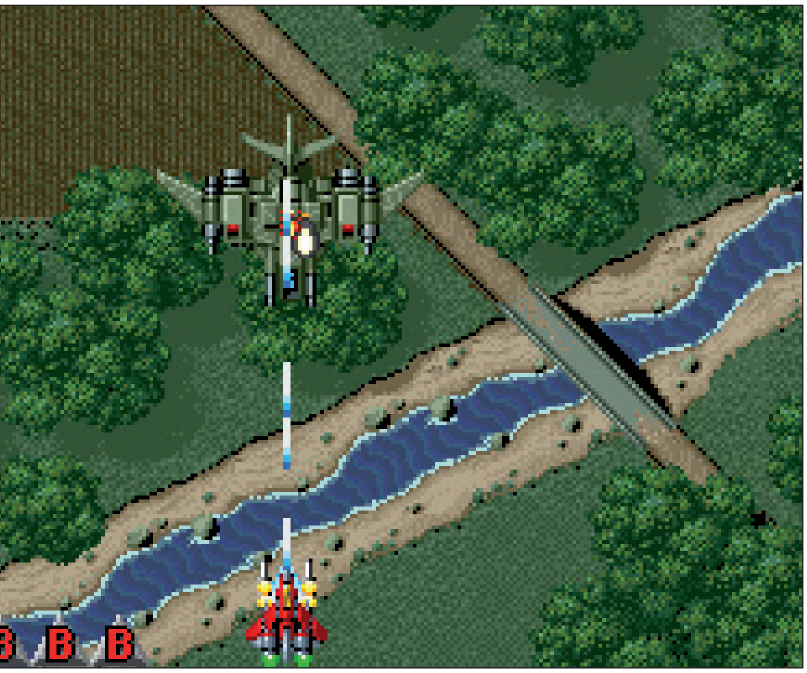
ID: aztecca
Fatal Fury. There have been better beat-'em-ups since, but this will always have a special place in my heart.

ID: Baki
Mine has to be *Samurai Spirits II*. I have played this so much and still go back to it. The atmosphere in the game is just so brilliant.

CONTACT US **Snail Mail:** Retro Gamer, Imagine Publishing, Richmond House, 33 Richmond Hill, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH2 6EZ **Email:** retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk

THE RETRO FORUM

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – WWW.RETROGAMER.NET



» Mike is scouring London for the best arcade games of yesteryear. The best of British luck, mate, as the arcades of today are not a patch on those found in the good old days.

A UNITED FRONT

Dear Retro Gamer,
I read Matthew Lightbourne's letter in issue 53 and ended up doing the same eye roll that I always do when I read such overly biased opinions. How can he say that anything after 8-bit is not retro? Retro is a Latin word that translates to 'backwards' or 'in past times'. It isn't specific to a certain era, so means different things to different people. He cites Dreamcast as not being retro enough, yet the console is getting on for ten years old and actually ceased production seven years ago, there are people in their late-teens to early-twenties who probably look back all dewy-eyed at it as their first experience with gaming.

The magazine has to keep evolving with the times, and I'm sure that come 2015 even Xbox 360 and PS3 will begin to feature.

Chris Clarke, Clevedon

You're right, Chris, it's a pity that some individuals have such a blinkered view of retro gaming, but sadly it's an issue that looks set to run and run. We'd love to create two versions of the magazine that cater to both the 8-bit and 16-bit markets, but it's just not sensible to do so. We all effectively love the same type of gaming, and it's this passion and dedication to our hobby that makes us all the same, regardless of which systems we prefer.

ARCADE MISERY

Dear Retro Gamer,
My name's Mike and I have recently moved from Australia to London, England, via a short tour of Europe.

Back home, I own the original arcade machine *Midnight Resistance*, which is one of my favourite arcade games of all time. Now, is it me or is there a serious lack of coin-op videogame arcades around this city? I know there are plenty of places that claim they are an arcade amusement house, but they are usually nothing more than cheap pokey-looking houses or crappy casinos full of dodgy characters.

I was wondering if you could give me a list of places where I might be able to play coin-op videogame arcade machines (particularly retro Seventies/Eighties/Nineties) games in this massive city or at least tell me what areas might have them.

I have only seen two proper arcades since exploring this city, but have forgotten where they were because we were kind of lost when we found them.

Mike, London

To be honest, Mike, arcades are a dying breed in the UK and have been for some time. Even Bournemouth's once-cherished Sega Park is now mostly inhabited by fruit machines and other non-gaming stuff. Still, there are a few places to look out for in London. We've been advised that you check out Casino on Tottenham Court Road and the Trocadero between Leicester Square and Piccadilly Circus. According to the lovely endo at NTSC-UK, Casino has plenty of decent shoot-'em-ups and fighting games, while the Troc has newer titles like Tekken 6 *and* After Burner Climax.

DESPERATELY SEEKING AUSTERLITZ

Dear Retro Gamer,
I hope you can help me. I have been trying for a year to find a PC game called *Austerlitz: Napoleon's Greatest Victory*. I have been in touch with the manufacturer, Breakaway Games, in the states and the game is out of print with no way of knowing if it will be reprinted. I have tried eBay, Amazon, and various other outlets, all without success. Do you know of any collectors out there who deal in strategy games such as this one and who would also be willing to sell their copy to me? Many thanks.

Bob Howard, via email

We're ever so sorry, Bob, but after checking all the usual places, we weren't able to get hold of it, either. We have, however, put a post up on our forum, so maybe another reader could help you out. Otherwise your best bet is to try eBay US (as opposed to the UK version) as you may have a better chance of tracking it down. Be prepared to pay a little extra on the postage, though.

» If anyone has a copy of *Austerlitz* that they no longer want then please get in touch with us. Bob Howard will be very happy if you do.



COLLECTOR'S CORNER

THIS MONTH WE'VE DECIDED TO INTERVIEW ONE OF OUR VERY OWN FREELANCERS, MAINLY BECAUSE **MAT ALLEN'S** COLLECTION OF GAMES IS QUITE SIMPLY MIND-BOGGLING



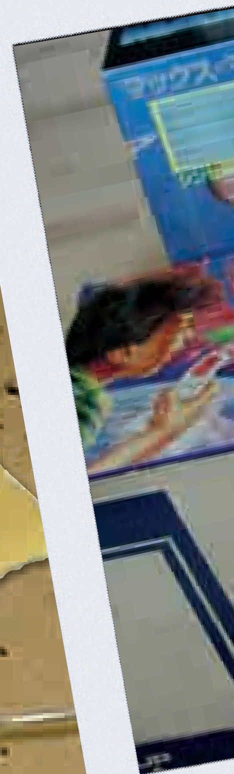
» "I haven't been dubbed the 'Commodore Cartridge King' for nothing… And there are more games out of shot."



» "Well, you need one shot of me for the article, so this is me holding the GamesMaster Golden Joystick I won after a challenge held in series three."



» "A development GDEV GameCube box, that could either play code fed to it via PC connection or from a development cartridge. A prototype GameCube controller sits on top."





» "Random Nintendo goodies acquired over the years, mostly from Club Nintendo in Japan and mostly through people I know with links to Japan."

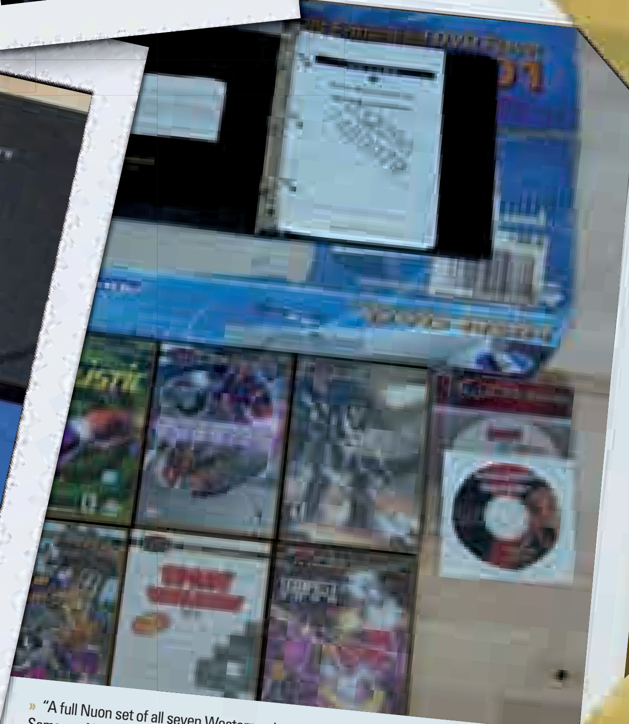


» "Collectable hardware time, all of them complete: Japanese VIC-1001, the C64 Games System console and the Japanese MAX computer."



» "A variety of releases, clockwise from top-left: standard-chipped PAL unit, PAL Yaroze unit, blue debug US unit and blue debug PAL unit. This last one was found for 20 quid in the used hardware display of my local Game."





» "A full Nuon set of all seven Western-released games, the Samsung N-501 DVD player, one of the interactive sampler discs, and an extremely rare VM Labs development manual."



» "A group shot of just about everything you could ever get for the machine, including all official releases for all three territories (US, Europe and Japan) and every single homebrew game."





» "A range of the US and Japanese Super Nintendo titles. A lot of great memories are held in the battery backup of these cartridges, I hope they still function."

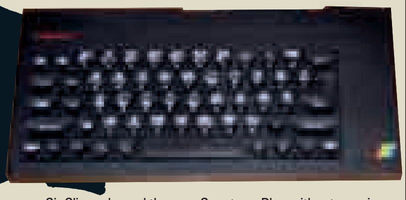
If you have a collection that you feel the rest of the **Retro Gamer** readership needs to know about then contact us at retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk and we'll do our best to get you in the magazine.

BACK TO THE EIGHTIES

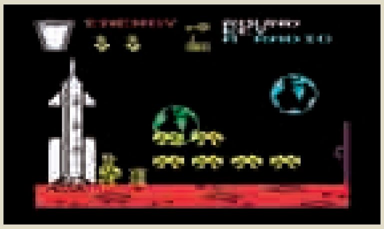
THE LATEST NEWS FROM OCTOBER 1984



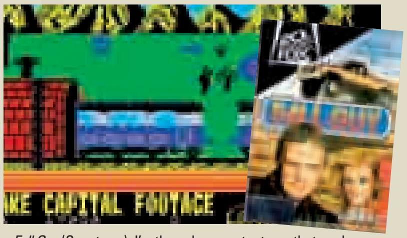
OCTOBER 1984 – Spectrum Plus appears, Ocean picks over Imagine, Wally Week's second coming, Miner Willy's third coming, the Ultimate trip to Karnath and the unknown stuntman and General Lee join the Elite. Richard Burton goes really fast with a girl named Bo…



» Sir Clive released the new Spectrum Plus without warning or fanfare. It'll be the C5 next…



» *Pyjamarama* (Amstrad): Wally Week's second outing and the game that really announced his arrival. A classic game.



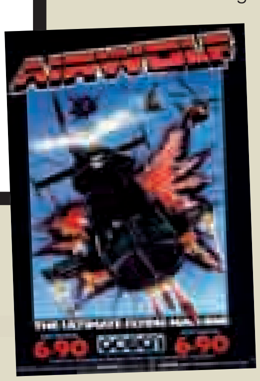
» *Fall Guy* (Spectrum): I'm the unknown stuntman that made Redford a star. Pity there wasn't a Bionic Man game instead…

Out of nowhere and completely unannounced, Sinclair released the Spectrum Plus. Priced at £179.95, the new look machine had a keyboard reminiscent of the QL and was fully compatible with the existing Spectrum machines. It seemed the primary reason for the sudden makeover had been the mounting pressure for a Spectrum with a proper keyboard rather than the familiar rubbery one.

There were also rumours that another new Spectrum, this time an enhanced 128K version, could be released late next year. This was seen as throwing down the gauntlet to the C64, which was steadily building a large fan base in the UK.

Little did Sinclair know that Commodore was readying itself for the release of its own 128K system. The new C128 was pencilled in to make an appearance at the Consumer Electronics Show in January.

The final remnants of the beleaguered software house Imagine had been disposed of by the liquidator and Ocean Software had been rummaging in the bargain bucket. Not only had Ocean taken over the main bulk of its assets, including several unreleased games, but it also bought the name and logo of the company. Ocean intended to use the Imagine brand for its arcade conversion releases.



» Ocean had a licence for an official *Airwolf* game, yet strangely, so did Elite Systems.

Meanwhile, while not picking over the carcasses of its main competitors, Ocean was releasing three new games, *Kong Strikes Back!*, *Hunchback II* and *Roland's Rat Race*. All would be available for C64 and Spectrum around Christmas time, although Roland would be fashionably late, appearing in autumn 1985.

Although Imagine had been put to rest, its infamous Megagames still commanded attention. According to the press of the time, it was reported that the unfinished *Bandersnatch* had been bought by Sinclair Research with a view to rewriting the game and releasing it on the QL. Sinclair was stated as saying that "the games are being developed by ex-Imagine staff" and "they are being paid a fee by Sinclair to complete the programs".

The mystery continued as no sign of *Bandersnatch*, the original or the new QL version, was ever released, although a completed working copy of the QL version apparently existed.

Former Imagine directors, Dave Lawson and Ian Hetherington later formed Psygnosis, which itself was formed from the loose ends of a company called FireIron. Psygnosis developed an Atari ST and Amiga version from the original ideas and game engine, creating a new game called *Brataccas*.



» *The Staff Of Karnath* (C64): Ultimate's first C64 offering introduced us to Sir Arthur Pendragon.

Software Projects decided to enter the budget games market with the formation of a sub-label, Software Supersavers. Games were priced at £2.99 with several releases already available, including *Freex* for the Spectrum and *Faces Of Haame* for the C64. In total, Software Supersavers released 12 games with the vast majority of them being gaming drudgery of the highest order.

The company did redeem itself somewhat with the C64 conversion of *Jet Set Willy* and two new games for the VIC-20, *Dodo Lair* and *The Perils Of Willy*. The latter was a continuation of Miner Willy's adventures in a single screen, 33 level platform game.

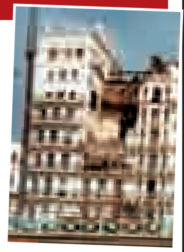
Elite Systems, formerly known as Richard Wilcox Software, announced it had acquired the licences to three American TV shows, *The Fall Guy* starring Lee Majors as stuntman Colt Seavers, *The Dukes Of Hazzard* starring Daisy Duke's shorts and *Airwolf*.



» *Roland's Rat Race* (C64): Ocean and Roland Rat Superstar cashed in on his fame with this average game. Yeah, Rat Fans!

1984

OCTOBER NEWS



» The Brighton Grand Hotel suffered major damage when an IRA bomb attempted to assassinate Margaret Thatcher.

12 October saw a bomb blast rip apart the Brighton Grand Hotel, the hotel chosen by the Conservative Party to stay at while attending their annual conference. Many MPs including the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, were asleep when the bomb went off just before 3am.

In total, 5 people died and 34 people were injured, including Norman Tebbit, the Trade And Industry Secretary. The bomb had been planted a few weeks earlier by IRA member Patrick Magee. He was sentenced to 35 years in prison although he was released in 1999 as part of the Good Friday Agreement.

In a ropy old month for Prime Ministers, Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India, was assassinated on the 31 October. Two guards at her home in New Delhi opened fire and she later died in hospital.

According to reports, the guards were Sikh extremists retaliating to the storming of the Golden Temple in Amritsar, a Sikh holy shrine, by Indian troops in June in which 1,000 people died. The two guards were sentenced to death and were hanged in 1989.

26 October saw the world premiere of *The Terminator* starring Arnold Schwarzenegger as a cybernetic killing machine with a taste for sunglasses and leather jackets.



» Early attempts at creating a scary cybernetic Terminator killing machine didn't hit the mark…



» *Minder* (Spectrum): dk'Tronics tried its hand at converting the TV programme into a computer game and didn't do a bad job of it.

The Fall Guy would see you jumping from train carriages and mining carts until you had attained the required jumps to progress to the next 'take' in the movie, which invariably led to another level of well timed jumps between moving things. It was okay but repetitive, not unlike the TV series.

The Dukes Of Hazzard turned out to be less impressive, the basic premise being that you, as the brothers Duke and the General Lee, have to win a cross-county race to pay off a Boss Hogg debt. Unfortunately the game played like a poor version of *Moon Patrol*.



» *Raid Over Moscow* (C64): Cold War meets Commodore. Superb gaming… although that hangar sequence… argghhhh!

Airwolf was a surprising announcement considering that Ocean Software had been running advertisements for its own officially licensed version of *Airwolf*. Had someone gaffed or did both companies have games lined up…?

Continuing the rash of TV related games, CRL was ready to unveil *Terrahawks* and *The Magic Roundabout* while dk'Tronics had started developing games based on *Minder* and *The Sweeney*, the latter of which would never get released.

Wally Week, Mikro-Gen's flat-capped mascot, was all set to feature in his second game. After the success of *Automania*, he would be returning for the superb arcade adventure *Pyjamarama*. Released on C64, Amstrad and Spectrum and available within the month, it would become a classic game.

Computer And Video Games installed *Boulderdash* (Statesoft, C64) as its Game of the Month, which it did well to attain considering some of the strong releases that month. Among the near misses were *Jetpac* (Ultimate, BBC), *Tapper* (US Gold, Spectrum), and *Strangeloop* (Virgin, Spectrum).

Personal Computer Games dished out its PCG Hit awards to *The Perils Of Willy* (Software Projects, VIC-20), *Dark Star* (Design Design, Spectrum), *American Football* (Argus Press, Spectrum), *Back Track* (Incentive, Dragon 32), *Mega Vault* (Ocean, VIC-20), *Poster Paster* (Taskset, C64), *Cliff Hanger* (New Generation, C64), *Lazy Jones* (Terminal Software, C64) and *Roland In Time* (Amsoft, Amstrad).

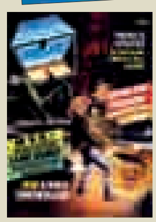
THIS MONTH IN…



PERSONAL COMPUTER GAMES

Software Projects was doing well… lots of games released… no less than seven full page adverts in this month's *PCG* and yet mysteriously, two of the games advertised, *The Master* and *Heebie Jeebies*, never got to see the light of day, under the Software Project's banner at least.

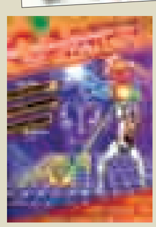




BIG K

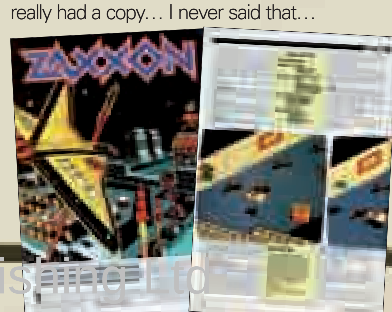
In a similar vein to our Retro Shamers, *Big K* laid into some of the right royal software duffers that had been released of late with their new 'Lame Games' feature. Some of the choice cuts of tripe on show were *Catcha Snatcha* and *BC Bill* by Imagine and *Valhalla* by Legend.





TV GAMER

TV Gamer had a preview of the arcade conversion of *Zaxxon*. Planned for release on the Atari 2600, C64, Spectrum and ColecoVision, the mag previewed the C64 version and, rather bizarrely, used illustrations for the screenshots rather than actual screen grabs. What's that? It never really had a copy… I never said that…



CHARTS

OCTOBER 1984



MUSIC

1. I Just Called To Say I Love You (Stevie Wonder)
2. The War Song (Culture Club)
3. Freedom (Wham!)
4. Ghostbusters (Ray Parker Jnr)
5. No More Lonely Nights (Paul McCartney)



SPECTRUM

1. Jet Set Willy (Software Projects)
2. Full Throttle (Micromega)
3. Tornado Low Level (Vortex)
4. Sabre Wulf (Ultimate)
5. Match Point (Psion)

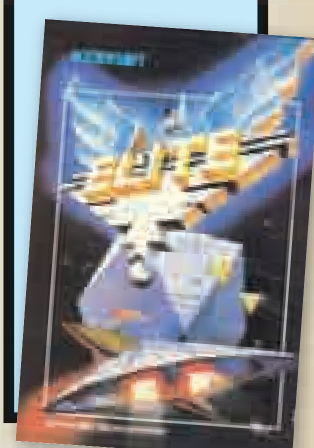


COMMODORE 64

1. Beach Head (US Gold)
2. Valhalla (Legend)
3. Pilot 64 (Abbex)
4. Football Manager (Addictive Games)
5. Decathlon (Activision)

BBC

1. Elite (Acornsoft)
2. Frak! (Aardvark)
3. Fortress (Pace Software)
4. Micro Olympics (Database)
5. Aviator (Acornsoft)



BACK TO THE NINETIES

THE LATEST NEWS FROM JANUARY 1991



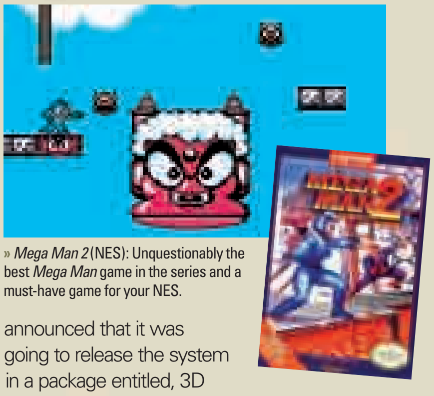
JANUARY 1991 – Lynx reduced, Panther dies, Jaguar develops, Cheetah's Gamate released into the wild, Bomb Jack reborn, footy galore and Virgin plays around with giant plums and a farty pair of pants. Richard Burton takes a look and holds his breath…



» It was made out of recycled bin liners, the games were rubbish and it cost nearly £60. What was Cheetah thinking…?



» *Knights Of The Sky* (PC): WWI aerial combat has never been so good. Take on Baron Von Richthofen in his dirty old Fokker.



» *Mega Man 2* (NES): Unquestionably the best *Mega Man* game in the series and a must-have game for your NES.

Atari, having recently taken the plunge back into the murky waters of consoles with the Lynx, announced it was working on a new 32-bit machine. Although only in the very early days of development, the console, the Atari Panther, would eventually target the Mega Drive and SNES as its closest rivals, being tentatively priced around the £200 mark when released.

Encouragingly, various UK software developers expressed an interest in releasing titles for it, which makes the story all the more disappointing that the Panther never made it past the prototype stage.

Flare Technology, the company behind the development of another console no-show, the Konix Multisystem, had been headhunted by Atari Corp to develop the Panther and with that it promptly added another console failure to its CV.

However, all was not lost. Atari was also looking at developing a 64-bit console, the Atari Jaguar. This project was progressing a lot faster than the Panther, which was eventually dropped in favour of the Jaguar.

While trying to knock up new consoles, Atari was also knocking the price down of its existing ones. The Lynx got a reduction of £50 to a more reasonable £130. Rather than being seen as a generous move by Atari it was perceived as an act of desperation. With the Game Boy running roughshod over anything handheld with a screen in it, Lynx sales needed a jump start. The price cut didn't help.

Ready to buy but almost as ill-fated as the Panther, was the Gamate. Produced by Taiwanese company, Bit Corporation, and distributed in the UK by joystick makers Cheetah, the Gamate was marketed as direct competition to the Game Boy. It was similar in specification, also having a monochrome LCD screen, but bore more of a resemblance to the Sega Game Gear. It also looked and felt rather cheap although the £59.99 price tag would make you think otherwise.

Although there was a reasonable selection of games for it, around 50, which came on HuCard-style cards, the Gamate fell roundly on its cheap plasticy arse and was a commercial failure. Naturally this makes it very hard to find nowadays and worth a small fortune on eBay…

Incentive, creator of the Freescape system used to produce shaded 3D landscapes announced that it was going to release the system in a package entitled, 3D Construction Kit. It would be available for an array of 16-bit and 8-bit systems with most versions available in three months.

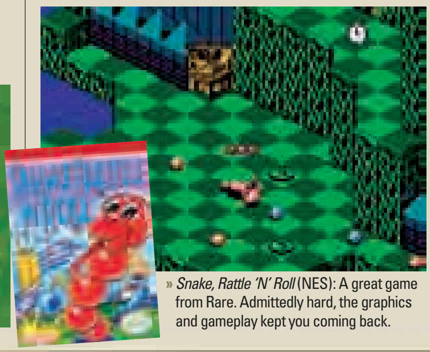
Elite Systems dusted off and breathed new life into one of its former chart-topping arcade conversions. The original *Bomb Jack* was a huge hit for almost every system it was released on, so Elite was hoping that its newest offering, *Mighty Bomb Jack*, would do the same. Available on Amiga and ST, it would be out by the end of the month.

Football games seemed to be gathering pace once again after last year's World Cup, with several newly announced titles. Anco's top-selling game, *Kick Off*, was due to be converted to SNES, NES, Mega Drive and Master System. Meanwhile, John Barnes, Liverpool player and occasional rapper, signed up with Krisalis to produce a licensed game.

Liverpool's archenemies, Manchester United, were also getting the Krisalis treatment with *Manchester United Europe*, released to commemorate English teams returning to European competition after the



» *Manchester United Europe* (Amiga): The C64 version was like Ronaldo, the Amiga version was more like Eric Djemba-Djemba…



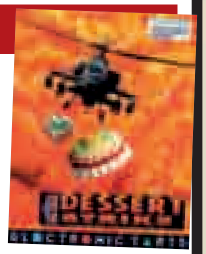
» *Snake, Rattle 'N' Roll* (NES): A great game from Rare. Admittedly hard, the graphics and gameplay kept you coming back.



» *Viz* (Atari ST): Gaming history is made. It's the first time a game features someone polishing their gonads.

1991

JANUARY NEWS



» Gulf War games soon started appearing. Some were good, others questionable. This one didn't make it past development…

There was only one real story this month, the Gulf War began. On 12 January US Congress voted for military force against Iraq, who'd invaded Kuwait. Should they not remove their troops by 15 January, a date set by the UN, the use of force would be authorised.

The deadline came and went and at 11.30pm (BST) on 16 January, Operation Desert Storm began with almost 400 raids taking place on Iraqi strategic and military targets. Although huge damage was caused, Saddam Hussein remained as boorish as ever with the statement that the, "Mother of all battles had begun."



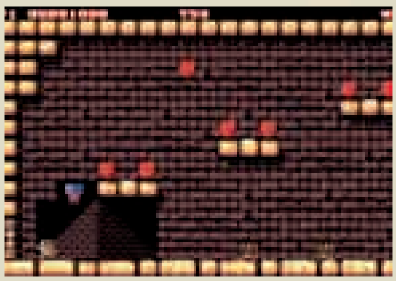
» The Gulf War begins and the Allied Forces drop thousands of bombs on Iraq.

On 17 January Iraq began launching Scud missiles towards Israeli cities. Initially no one was sure whether these missiles contained explosive or chemical warheads. The attempt by Iraq to draw Israel into the Gulf War failed although Israel was enraged by the attacks and promised "massive punishment", but the Coalition persuaded Israel to leave any retaliation to the Allies. The war continued into February…

On a lighter note, *Home Alone* starring Macaulay Culkin topped the movie charts for the entire month in America. Hang on, that's not a good thing either…



» *NARC* (C64): Hmm… Bit of a Marmite game this. Some absolutely love it; several hundred thousand sane gamers loathe it.



» *Mighty Bomb Jack* (Amiga): Bomb Jack is back, but not quite hitting the mark as he did in his previous outings.

Heysel disaster ban. *John Barnes* would be available on Amiga and ST with *Manchester United* on Spectrum, C64 and Amstrad.

Finally, *Gazza II* by Empire was ready for release on a host of systems. However, rather unrealistically, at no point in the game does Gazza's kneecap fly off into the top corner of the goal instantly ending a promising career.

Staying with Geordie-related matters, the release of a computer game based on the characters of the cult comic *Viz* was imminent. Developer, Virgin Games, had created a game that saw you take control of one of three *Viz* creations; Biffa Bacon, Johnny Fartpants or Buster Gonad (complete with large testicles). Another character, Roger Mellie, provided the in-game filth-encrusted commentary.



» 3D Construction Kit (Spectrum): Make 3D worlds of your own. If you re-create your bedroom, leave the *Razzles* out of sight…

Viz would hit the shops in January and enrage mums, grannies and members (ooer) of the clergy the length and breadth (fnarr) of the country. Buster's great big hairy saddlebags could be seen on Amiga, ST, Amstrad, Spectrum and C64.

This month *C&VG* awarded the C&VG Hit stamp to *ESWAT* (US Gold, Amiga), *Speedball 2* (Imageworks, ST), *Toyota Celica GT Rally* (Gremlin, Amiga), *Extreme* (Digital Integration, Spectrum), *NARC* (Ocean, C64), *Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles* (Imageworks, Amstrad), *Masterblazer* (Rainbow Arts, Amiga), *Knight Of The Sky* (Microprose, PC), *Prince Of Persia* (Domark, Amiga), *Golden Axe* (Virgin Games, ST), *Covert Action* (Microprose, PC) and *Line Of Fire* (US Gold, Amiga).

And it didn't stop there by pouncing on the console games too, liberally spraying the C&VG Hit status all over *Sky Shark* (Sega, Mega Drive), *John Madden's American Football* (EA, Mega Drive), *Paperboy* (US Gold, SMS), *Gauntlet* (US Gold, Master System) and *Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade* (US Gold, SMS).

Its sister mag, *Mean Machines*, was more considered, giving Mega Game status to *Mega Man 2* (Capcom, NES), *Switchblade* (Gremlin, Amstrad GX4000), *Snake Rattle 'N' Roll* (Rare, NES) and *Castle Of Illusion Starring Mickey Mouse* (Sega, SMS).

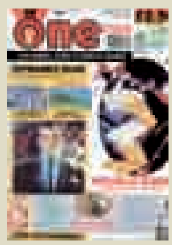
THIS MONTH IN…



ZERO

An interesting departure from videogames this month was this feature highlighting various ways of setting up a fanzine of your own. Although it was three pages long it basically said in a roundabout sort of way, buy a Pritt Stick, Tipp-Ex and scissors, get some contributors, write some stuff in it, photocopy it and sell it. Top tips.

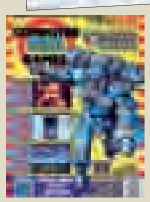




THE ONE

The One ran a preview on the new *Judge Dredd* game that saw Dredd battle Fatties, Orlok and The Dark Judges. It also had an interview with *2000AD* scriptwriter, John Wagner. Interesting (ish) Fact: Frankenstein from the *Death Race 2000* movie, partly inspired the Dredd look.





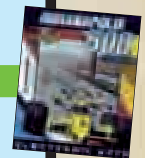
COMPUTER & VIDEO GAMES

With a mini influx of new releases for the Atari Lynx, *C&VG* covered several of the games in a special Lynx reviews section. Five games were featured; *Ms. Pac-Man*, *Xenophobe*, *Slime World*, *Road Blasters* and the best of the bunch, *Klax*, although they all rated highly with Lynx-owning reviewer, Julian Rignall.



CHARTS

JANUARY 1991



AMIGA

1 Indianapolis 500 (Electronic Arts)
2 Supremacy (Virgin)
3 Captive (Mindscape)
4 Awesome (Psygnosis)
5 Lotus Esprit Turbo Challenge (Gremlin)



ATARI ST

1 Captive (Mindscape)
2 Team Yankee (Empir
3 F-19 Stealth Fighter (Microprose)
4 Their Finest Hour (Lucasfilm/US Gold)
5 The Power Pack (Beau Jolly)

PC

1 Test Drive III (Accolade)
2 Silent Service II (Microprose)
3 Midwinter (Micropros
4 Flight Simulator 4 (Microsoft)
5 Operation Stealth (Delphine/US Gold)



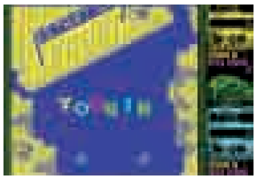
MUSIC

1 Sadeness Part 1 (Enigma)
2 3am Eternal (KLF)
3 Crazy (Seal)
4 Innuendo (Queen)
5 Bring Your Daughter To The Slaughter (Iron Maiden)



TOOBIN'

A THREE PACK OF RUBBER JOLLIES



- **PUBLISHER:** DOMARK
- **RELEASED:** 1989
- **GENRE:** SPORTS
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** CPC, C64, SPECCY
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** A FEW QUID



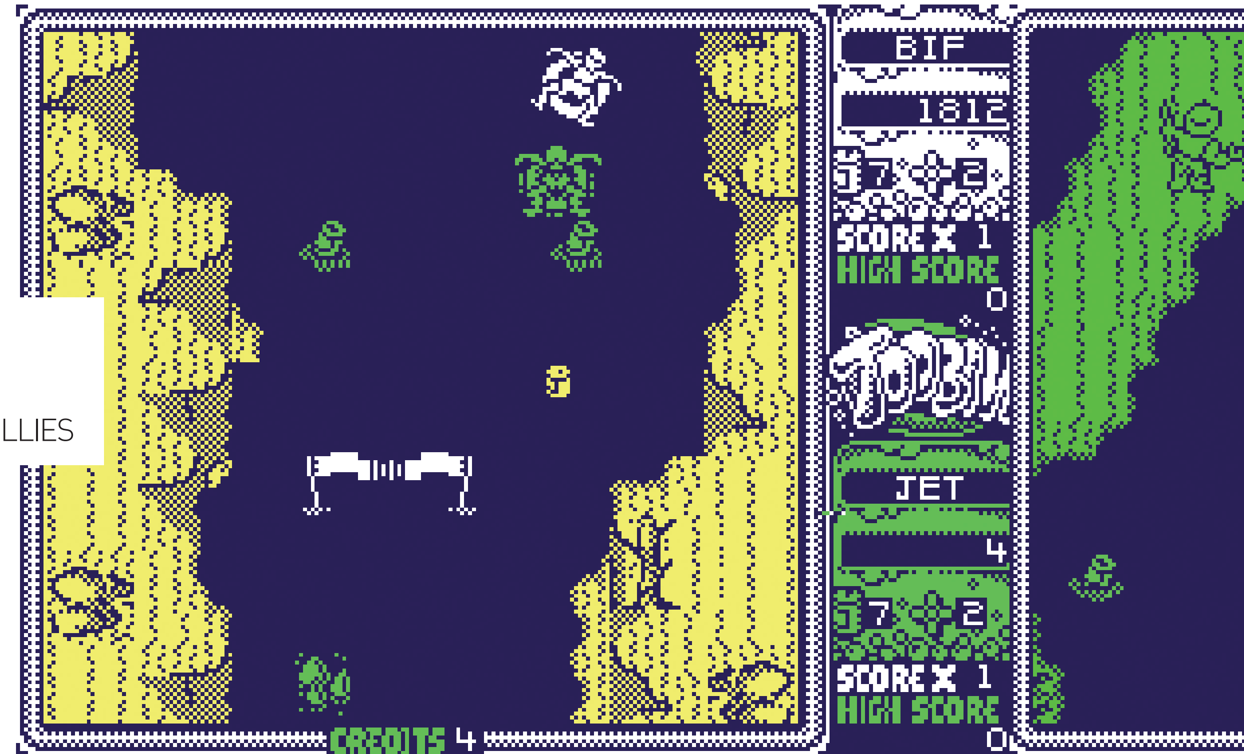
HISTORY

Throwing caution to the wind; that's the essence of any extreme sport isn't it? Abseiling, rock climbing, base-jumping and lion juggling are four of the most dangerous extreme pastimes known to man, but they all swim inside a paddling pool of pansies when held up to the sport portrayed in *Toobin'*; the art of traversing a polluted river in just a pair of Bermuda shorts and a rubber ring.

This peculiar little game from Atari began life in the arcades and would eventually find its way into people's homes via the power of computers. Here's a smattering of screenshots taken from some of the finest 8-bit micros we have to offer. As you can see, while the Speccy's affinity to the colour yellow means the game kinda looks like your character is cascading down a sea of bowel juice, it does boast the silkiest feel of the three platforms. The CPC version, predictably, is simply an idol port of the Speccy game but benefiting blue water, a sick soundtrack and peculiarly opts to paint everything in lemon. The C64 port, despite boasting actual colour, is still sadly nothing to really shout home about – unless you like bricks and blocks.

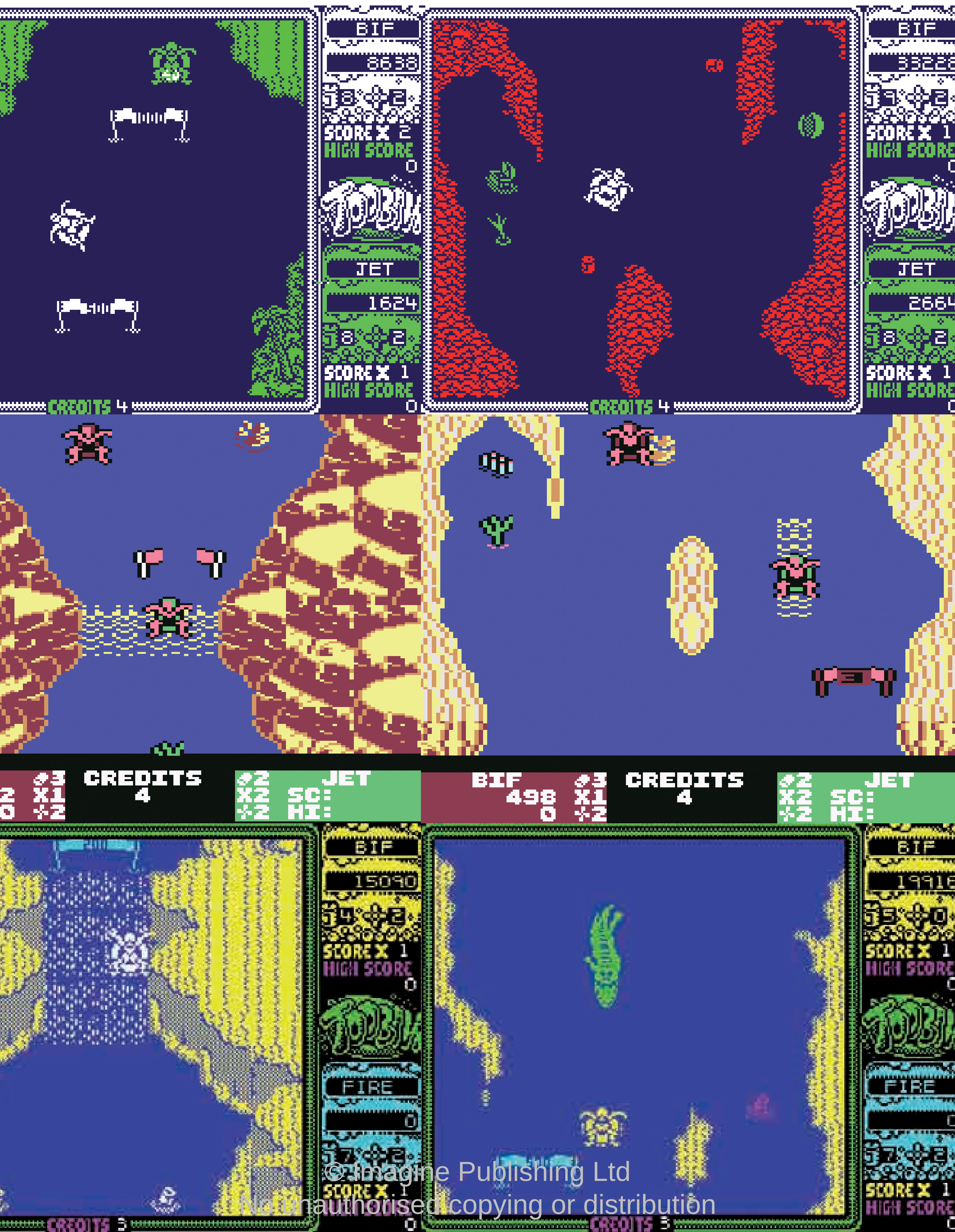
Toobin', as we said, involves two surfer-types called Jet and Bif negotiating a stretch of water brimming with hazards and getting to the finish line before their aerated craft becomes deflated. To add a little variety into the racing, the game throws in twigs and marauding crocodiles to avoid, and lets you fire cans out of your crotch and bash into your mates when engaging in two-player spats.

Toobin' is a bit of a guilty pleasure for me. I've heard many people bemoan the ports for not being a patch on their arcade parent – owing to its peculiar five button controls being switched for a less than intuitive turn-and-move system on keyboards – but I still enjoy the stupidity of it all. Not quite a classic game admittedly but it still puts a grin on my face, which is enough to warrant me writing 348 words about it.

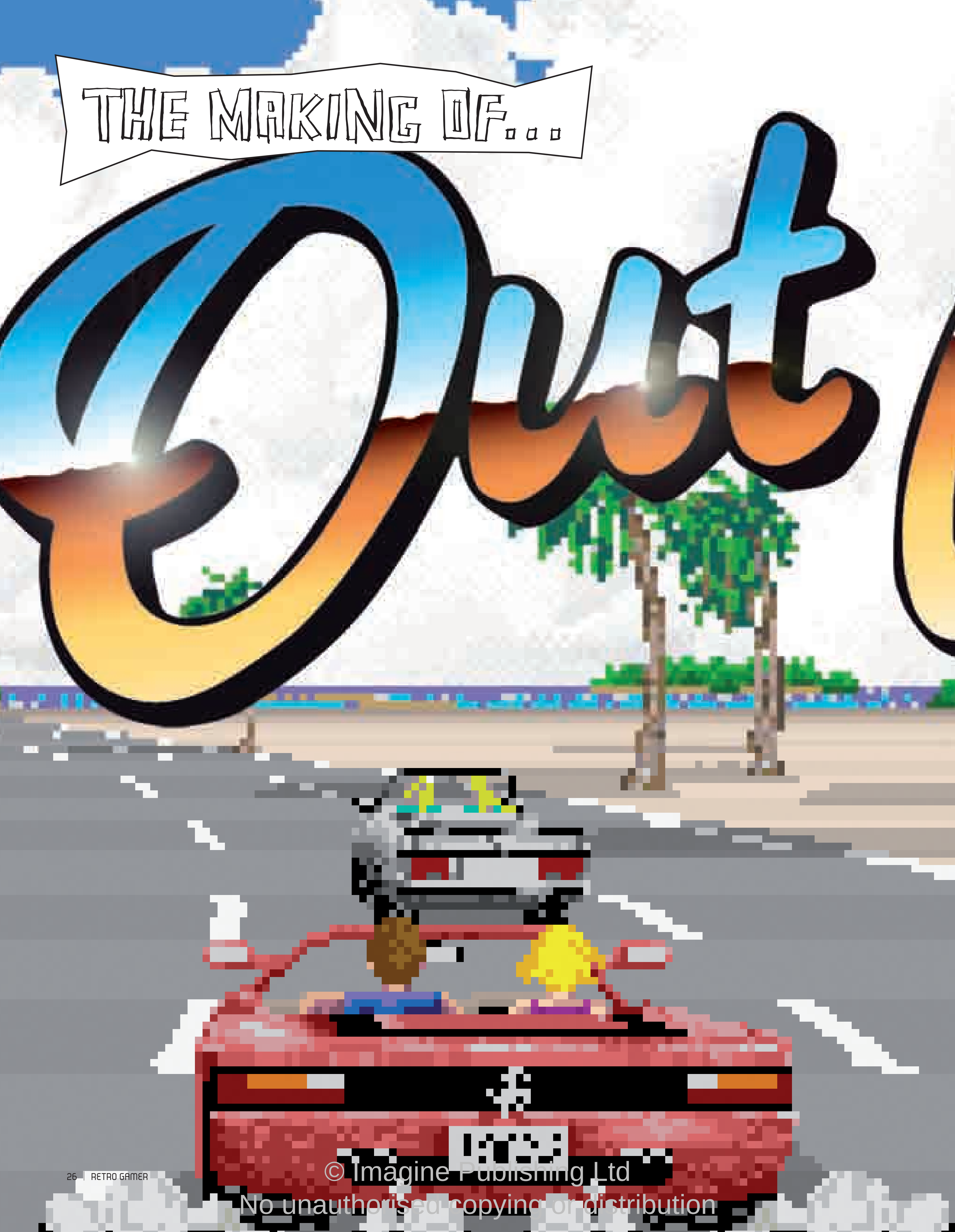







BIF
8638
SCORE X 2
HIGH SCORE
JET
1624
SCORE X 1
CREDITS 4
BIF
33228
JET
2664
CREDITS 4
CREDITS
4
JET
X2 SC:
HI:
BIF
498
CREDITS
4
JET
BIF
15090
SCORE X 1
HIGH SCORE
FIRE
CREDITS 3
BIF
FIRE
CREDITS 3

THE MAKING OF... Out





JONTI DAVIES MEETS YU SUZUKI – LEGENDARY GAME PROGRAMMER, FERRARI OWNER AND PART-TIME PHILOSOPHER – TO DISCUSS SEGA'S MOST ICONIC DRIVING GAME, THE 1986 CLASSIC THAT IS OUTRUN

Yu Suzuki joined Sega in 1983, his first assignment was *Champion Boxing* on the SG-1000. From there, Suzuki's progress began to gain momentum. By the end of 1985 he had already established himself at the vanguard of coin-op development, having masterminded a couple of major successes for Sega in the form of *Hang-On* and *Space Harrier*. But Suzuki's journey towards becoming a legendary videogame producer was about to shift to a higher gear, and it was the following year's *OutRun* driving game that turned Suzuki into an internationally renowned programming superstar.

Before a brief diversion to code the thrilling sci-fi blast of *Space Harrier* in time for a December 1985 release, Suzuki's attention was first centred on the racing genre. The result of Suzuki's initial drive was *Hang-On* (which appeared in Japan's arcades in July 1985), a high-speed bike racing game where players literally felt as though they had to hang on to the coin-op cabinet's handlebars. Part of Suzuki's motivation for *Hang-On*'s production was a desire to see to it that Sega overturn Namco as Japan's leading manufacturer of racing games, and while *Hang-On* was a superb title – and one which radically altered Sega's image – he accepted that his first racing game alone hadn't been sufficient for Sega to overtake its main rival, the developer of *Pole Position*. Namco was still synonymous with driving games; Sega was being lapped. Suzuki wasn't fond of repetition, so instead of producing another bike racing game he opted to create the car driving game that would become *OutRun*.

Well, that's one side of the story. The other, less weighty but equally important reason for Yu Suzuki's determination to create *OutRun* came from a Burt Reynolds flick, as he confesses to us: "The main impetus behind *OutRun*'s creation was my love of a film called *The Cannonball Run*. I thought it would be good to make a game like that. The film crosses America, so I made a plan to follow the same course and collect data as I went. But I realised, once I'd arranged everything, that the scenery along the [pan-America] course actually doesn't change very much, so I revised my plan and decided to collect data in Europe instead…" Although *Cannonball Run* clearly had a great influence on Suzuki's work with *OutRun*, the game also bears what must have been a coincidental similarity to the euphoric scene in *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* (also a 1986-vintage production) in which Ferris, the sassy Sloane at his side, speeds off in a rosso corsa Ferrari 250GT. Regardless, Suzuki's attention had been diverted away from America, towards Europe.

Suzuki's maverick approach to game development would, during the Nineties, become accepted practice (12 years later, for example, fellow Sega-man Yuji Naka would take his *Sonic Adventure* team to South America purely for research purposes), but in the mid-Eighties Suzuki was already doing things the interesting way, literally journeying around the world just to make sure that his game would be the real deal. Suzuki's plans culminated in a European research adventure. "Because of the 'transcontinental' concept," he recalls, "I felt that I should first actually follow such a course myself, collecting information with a video camera, a still camera, and other equipment. I started out from Frankfurt, where I hired a rent-a-car, and I installed a video camera on the car. I drove around Monaco and Monte Carlo, along the mountain roads of Switzerland, stopping in hotels in Milan, Venice and Rome, collecting data for a fortnight. I have many happy memories of that trip. There were many places I visited where communicating in English wasn't sufficient: one time, when ordering a meal, I thought I had asked [in a European language] for a single bowl of soup but was surprised when four bowls of soup were brought to me!"

Soup or no soup, there was still much work to be done during Suzuki's fortnight in Europe. "The next step was to talk with local people in the places I visited, and [later] to make those discussions and other episodes reflected in the game," Suzuki remembers. The result was a unique videogame snapshot of the

IN THE KNOW

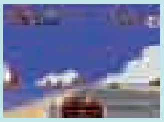


» **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
» **DEVELOPER:** AM2
» **RELEASED:** 1986
» **GENRE:** DRIVING
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £1-£50 (DEPENDING ON WHICH VERSION YOU GO FOR)

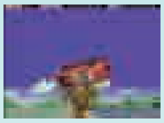
VERSION EXCURSIONS



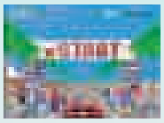
Sega Mark III/Master System
This was the first console conversion of *OutRun*, appearing in Japan on 30 June 1987 – less than 12 months after the coin-op debuted in Japan. It wasn't a bad effort, either: in terms of presentation it's superior to most 8-bit computer versions, and the game also supported the Mark III's Yamaha YM2413 FM sound unit, which helped ensure the soundtrack didn't sound too far removed from the original tunes heard in the coin-op.



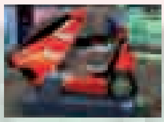
Mega Drive
In August 1990 *OutRun* was released on a Mega Drive cartridge, having been successfully ported to the console by conversion specialist Sanritsu Denki (now an independent developer known as SIMS, this company was at the time wholly owned by Sega). The Mega Drive version of *OutRun* was notable for featuring a new, exclusive song called *Step On Beat*.



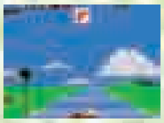
PC-Engine
This Japan-only PC-Engine conversion by NEC showed up at the end of 1990. It's an excellent piece of work, easily outstripping the Master System version while giving the Mega Drive release a good run as well – in spite of the supposed superiority of the Mega Drive hardware.



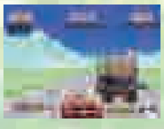
Sega Saturn
The brilliant Saturn version of *OutRun* was released in Japan under the Sega Ages banner in September 1996. Not only does this disc contain both the Japanese domestic and international variations on the arcade code, but it also features a 60fps refresh rate that outperforms the coin-op's 30fps standard. The Saturn build even includes newly arranged versions of the classic four-song soundtrack, which were personally reworked by Hiroshi Kawaguchi in early 1996. This *OutRun* release was handled by Game no Rutsubo, another specialist Japanese conversion outfit.



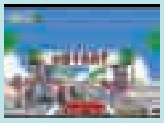
Dreamcast
While certainly highly respectable versions of the game, *OutRun* in both *Shenmue II* (where it appeared as a mini-game) and *Yu Suzuki Gameworks* (as part of a five-game retrospective compendium) differs from the original arcade in a couple of areas: specifically, the player's car is a generic Ferrari-style motor but not the original Testarossa design, while the timbre of the music is also slightly changed. In spite of these discrepancies, both Dreamcast appearances were in fact produced by Game no Rutsubo, who had done such a spellbinding job with the Saturn version.



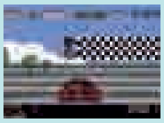
Game Gear
This was the first handheld version of *OutRun*, released in 1991. As expected, the Game Gear version struggles to re-create the look of the coin-op, but it does succeed in achieving a first for *OutRun* outside of the arcade: plug in a Link Cable and two-player racing becomes an option.



Game Boy Advance
This surprisingly fine version of *OutRun* appeared along with dinky takes on *After Burner*, *Space Harrier* and *Super Hang-On* as part of the Atari-published *Sega Arcade Gallery*, which was released in the UK in January 2003. Ironically, in spite of its quality, the Bits Studios-converted GBA *OutRun* never appeared at retail in Japan.



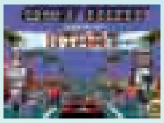
Mobile
OutRun on a mobile phone? Yep, and there are some keitai versions available in Japan that look superior to some of the 8 and even 16-bit console renditions of the game. Shame about the controls, though…



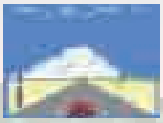
Commodore 64
The loading times on this 1987-vintage C64 version were unbearable, and the gameplay wore livery that was only vaguely similar to the real *OutRun*. There was no choice of routes, and only *Magical Sound Shower* and *Splash Wave* were represented (albeit in an approximated way) on C64 *OutRun*'s soundtrack. On the plus side, there were a few POKEs you could input to either stop the clock from ticking down or to enable you to pass through other vehicles. Thank goodness for the Saturn.



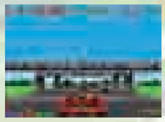
Sinclair ZX Spectrum
The Probe-developed 1988 Speccy version of *OutRun* was, like the Commodore 64 release, published by US Gold. Also like that Commodore 64 title, it was barely a fraction of the game that players knew from the arcades.



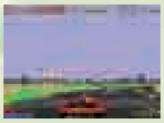
Amstrad CPC
OutRun on the CPC, also released in 1988 and programmed by Probe, wasn't much better than the Spectrum version: it had no in-game music, and again it looked like a distant, ugly relative of the coin-op. On the plus side, CPC *OutRun* had the proper route-switching setup (which the Commodore 64 release infamously was without) and it was bundled with a tape of the music from the arcade version, so you could stick that on the stereo while playing and sort of trick yourself into believing you had a virtual arcade in your bedroom.



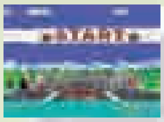
MSX/MSX2
OutRun on the MSX and MSX2 was released in 1988. It was a simple reduction of the coin-op, looking even more stripped-down (although a lot more colourful) than the C64 version. Although MSX *OutRun* was released immediately after the FMPAC sound source cartridge came out, this Pony Canyon-published release failed to take advantage of the new hardware add-on, resulting in a blippy-sounding mediocrity.



Commodore Amiga
For those who were lucky enough to own an A500 as early as 1989, Probe had an Amiga conversion of *OutRun* that resembled the coin-op much more closely (at least to the point where it was obvious what the source material was) than the CPC and ZX versions it had also coded.



Atari ST
Likewise, the ST version of *OutRun*, which was released in 1988, shortly before the Amiga build appeared, was a continent away from the 8-bit computer ports it outran.

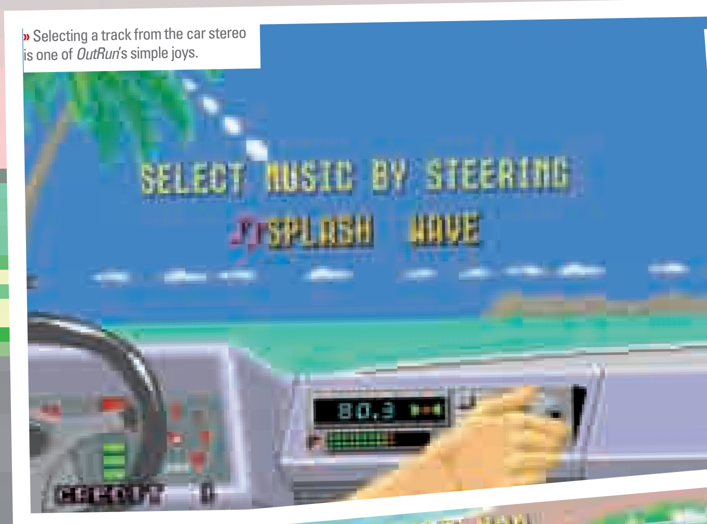


DOS
DOS users weren't left out of the *OutRun* conversion circus, either: Sega published a version programmed by Distinctive Software employees (under the Unlimited Software alias) in 1989. It was a worthy effort, although the Amiga and Atari ST versions had greater shine.

mid-Eighties, a Japanese interpretation of European geography. *OutRun* is in many ways the game that is most representative of bubble-time Japan's extravagances: it's a production with concessions to luxury (driving a Ferrari Testarossa, sitting inside a state-of-the-art coin-op cab), taken at endless high speeds across effusively bright European-styled country, all to an inspirational soundtrack where the only hint of melancholy arrives beyond the final checkpoint, as *Last Wave* fades out.

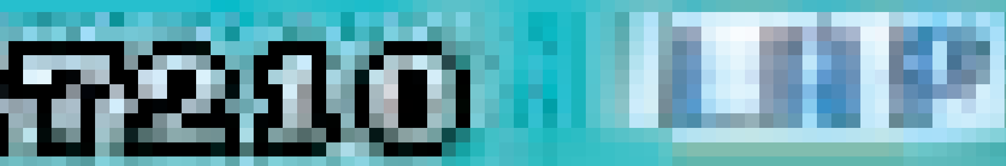
Even while the bubble lasted, however, there were some limits. Sega's resources were not endless and the technology available to Suzuki at the time – while fearsomely powerful compared with other hardware of a mid-Eighties vintage – didn't stack sufficient memory to facilitate all of Suzuki's dreams. As a consequence of these and other factors, most notably a lack of time, Yu Suzuki found it necessary to make a few compromises during *OutRun*'s development. It turns out that these cuts were not to any great gameplay detriment, yet Suzuki was instinctively unhappy with being forced to sacrifice any of his ideas: "I was only able to put around half of the things I wanted to do into *OutRun*," he says. "Because of budget and development time limitations, some of the contents I'd planned had to be squeezed or cut. I'd made preparations for eight individual characters and I wanted to include various events at each checkpoint, which would have made the player experience a story; something like the *Cannonball Run* film. I also wanted to give players a choice of supercars to drive, so that they could enjoy differences in car performance."

Of course Suzuki's hoped-for garage of driveable Ferraris was eventually realised to near-perfection in 2003's *OutRun 2*, but for the original game he had to be satisfied with just one Ferrari. "Naturally I was yearning for Ferraris," Suzuki says. "Above all, the most talked-about car of the time was the 12-cylinder Ferrari Testarossa. The first time I saw the car was in Monaco, and I was really moved by its beauty – I thought, 'there is no choice: this is the only one'. There are many other charming Ferraris, but memory problems made it impossible to include them in the game… So we decided that the player's car should be the 12-cylinder Testarossa."



» Selecting a track from the car stereo is one of *OutRun*'s simple joys.





THE CAR IN FRONT IS A TESTAROSSA

"Five of us squeezed into a car and drove for three hours to see a [privately owned] Testarossa"

YU SUZUKI ON HIS TEAM'S DEDICATION TO FERRARI'S HOTTEST CAR OF THE EIGHTIES

On returning to Japan, Yu Suzuki and his team set out to conduct further research. Suzuki had already explored the potential for *OutRun*'s scenery and environment throughout his European rent-a-car expedition; his team's next objective was to learn more about the Testarossa, but this was fraught with problems, as Suzuki relates: "Only a tiny number of Testarossas had been brought into Japan, so we had some trouble finding an owner to help us with collecting car data. Eventually, five of us squeezed into a small car and drove for three hours to see a [privately owned] Testarossa. We took photos of it from every side, at five-degree intervals, and we also recorded the sound of the engine."

Suzuki's work on *OutRun* was a model of thoughtful, conscientious design. Suzuki has previously spoken of keeping a notepad and Dictaphone next to his bed, so that he could quickly note any ideas he had in dreams. It's no coincidence that *OutRun*'s opening stretch of road is traffic free: this was to ensure that players stood no risk of being discouraged by suffering a collision early in the game, so soon after inserting a 100 yen coin to play. Instant explosions on collisions between vehicles, too, in spite of being prevalent in racing games prior to the *OutRun* era, were not to Suzuki's liking, and he deliberately omitted this faddish conceit when designing both *Hang-On* and *OutRun*. On the other hand, Suzuki reckoned that zooming out into the lead and then just staying there for the rest of the race wasn't much fun either, which is partly why *OutRun* is a race against the clock, rather than an inter-vehicle competition.

Yu Suzuki's personal gameplay preferences happened to be in tune with those of the majority of players, leading to design decisions that would help *OutRun* to push driving games away from their tendency towards 'the impossible', as Suzuki explains: "At the time of *OutRun*'s development, driving games were made whereby a collision with another car would automatically result in an explosion, and they had many things that would be impossible with real cars. Even if you were good at driving actual cars, the skills needed in those games were completely different. I wanted to make a driving game where people who were skilful drivers of cars could also achieve good results in the game. For that reason, where at all possible, we simulated features such as horsepower, torque, gear ratios and tyre engineering close to those of real cars. For features that were difficult to control, we added AI assistance. For its time, I think the level of *OutRun*'s production was very high."

The AI assistance Suzuki speaks of was used to particularly good effect with the handling of the Testarossa. The 'drift' techniques Japanese racing game developers tend to talk about are, according to Suzuki, essential in good driving games – if the car's tyres grip the road surface too closely, the handling of the car will be too twitchy – but prior to *OutRun* this wasn't commonly appreciated by driving game developers. The response of *OutRun*'s Ferrari was pitched perfectly, however, neatly averting all of the frustrations that players feel when they're attempting to control cars which are prone to understeer, oversteer or 'twitchiness'. And it's just as well, really: not only did *OutRun* present endless one-way traffic through which you had to weave a path, but it also presented a choice of routes at the end of each stage, demanding that you swerve left or right to head towards the next easier/trickier area. In a game as gorgeous as *OutRun*, while the primary thrill was in the ride, part of the fun was just seeing what the next stage looked like.

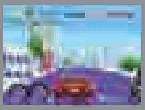




» The opening stretch of track was kept free of traffic so as not to deter players too early on.

» Failure to get a move on results in a very angry flagman.





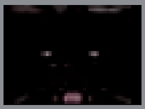
Turbo OutRun
Turbo OutRun was the first of many pseudo-sequels to Yu Suzuki's original formula, and this one gets even closer to the *Cannonball Run* inspiration by virtue of its setting as a pan-America race. It also introduced a turbo feature for limited quick boosts.



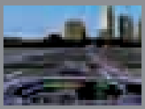
Battle OutRun
An exclusive game for the Sega Master System, *Battle OutRun* stripped away all of the notions of luxurious driving from the original *OutRun* game and replaced them with cheap criminal-chase 'thrills'. Hmm.



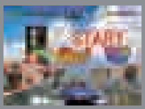
OutRun Europa
This entry in what was becoming a series of sort-of *OutRun* games appeared on the Game Gear, SMS and C64 in 1991. It tried to be the Sega-authorised contender to Taito's excellent *Chase HQ*, but failed due to shoddy design and cheap production values.



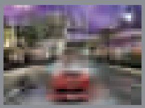
OutRun 3-D
Another SMS release, *OutRun 3-D* was designed to take advantage of the SegaScope 3D Glasses. It seemed futuristic, although the developer's lack of confidence in the concept was belied by its reassurance-veiled-as-a-boast, "WITH 2-D MODE!"



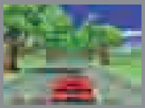
OutRun 2019
F-Zero meets *OutRun* in this Mega Drive release from 1993. The diverging routes of *OutRun* at least are retained here, however, the Ferrari has been replaced with an awkwardly styled rocket car… from the future.



OutRunners
This is one of the better *OutRun* sequels, the coin-op version featuring linked cabinets for multiplayer racing and the System Multi 32 board powering late sprite-based graphics drawn in a style similar to Yu Suzuki's 1988 classic, *Power Drift*.



OutRun 2 / OutRun 2 SP
This great game had a full Ferrari licence with eight drivable supercars, as well as new game modes and awesome Chihiro-powered 3D graphics. It was the first real sequel to *OutRun*, and it had only taken 17 years to arrive.



Sega Ages 2500 Vol. 13: OutRun
This is in part a sequel to *OutRun* and in part a conversion of the original game, in dull polygonal 3D graphics. A new Arrange mode means you needed to overtake rivals within each stage, and then stay ahead of them until the end of your drive.



OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast
This is the homecoming of *OutRun 2* and *SP*, collecting fine Xbox, PS2, PSP and PC conversions of the arcades together with additional console/computer-exclusive material. Essential.

THE MAKING OF... OUTRUN





» Cutting it this close can be incredibly frustrating.

Suzuki concurs, explaining that the emphasis on the scenery was deliberate: "I wanted to make a game where you could enjoy magnificent changing scenery and landscapes while driving, and really get a nice sensation from playing it – not a stoic racing style of play."

From the use of a roofless Testarossa and the choice of Coconut Beach as the game's first stage, to the names of the soundtrack selections (breeze, wave, shower) and the various pastel shades used to draw the sky, *OutRun* feels almost tangibly fresh; the perfect game for summer. We mention this to Suzuki, quietly hoping we haven't just perceived the experience horribly wrong all these years. "Yes, that's correct," he nods, to our relief. "I wanted to make stages where you could smell the fresh fragrance of new leaves and flowers, like in the green meadows of Switzerland, so I'm happy that you were able to sense that."

For such a cohesive, finely crafted game, it's surprising to hear that the team behind *OutRun* was very much a randomly assembled group of individuals from within Sega. "The team consisted of four programmers, five graphics designers and one sound creator," Suzuki says, "and we had the [coin-op] cabinet made by commissioning another team. The game development team was made up of people who happened to be available at the time, so I wasn't able to assemble the team according to my wishes. I wrote all of the important planning and programming parts myself; I don't think anything was really influenced by the development staff. I recall the bulk of development work taking between eight and ten months to complete. However, during those eight to ten months I was almost living at Sega," he laughs.

Although the other programmers and graphics designers working on *OutRun* appear, according to Suzuki, to have had scant influence on shaping the game, one man – Hiroshi Kawaguchi (the artist formerly known as Hiroshi Miyauchi) – had a tremendous effect on what has become one of the most highly regarded aspects of *OutRun*'s production: its music. Kawaguchi joined Sega as a programmer in 1984, coding alongside Yuji Naka on the SG-1000 game *Girl's Garden* while writing music purely as a hobby outside of work. Suzuki heard some of Kawaguchi's tunes and was so impressed that he commissioned him to produce the soundtrack for *Hang-On*, after which Kawaguchi quit his role as a programmer and became a full-time in-house composer at Sega.

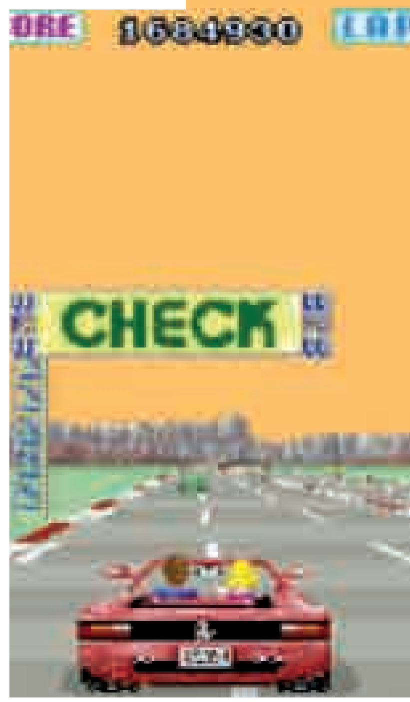
Yu Suzuki, himself a guitarist, had specific requests of Kawaguchi for his *OutRun* assignment: "During the planning stage I explained in detail to the sound engineer what type of tunes were needed. I told him that basically I wanted eight-beat rock rhythms at a tempo of 150bpm. I remember selecting a number of tunes to be used as points of reference. In those days we couldn't use samplers or PCM sound sources, so the timbre of the tunes was a synthesizer creation, which led to us having some difficulty when attempting to trim data quantities for playback of the tunes. I remember wanting some guitars and voices in the soundtrack, but it was impossible to achieve with the technology of the time, so I ultimately had to give up."

The final soundtrack represents one of the finest, enduring examples of Japanese videogame music. *OutRun* offers players a choice of three tunes – *Passing Breeze*, *Magical Sound Shower* and *Splash Wave* – via a mock car-stereo screen before the action begins. It's a concise collection of aurally luxurious numbers, each upbeat and catchy to the point where players would anticipate every subsequent bar. Somehow these tunes fit *OutRun*'s graphics perfectly, and they even seem to be in tune with the feel of the Testarossa's acceleration and handling. This is explained in part by Yu Suzuki's balanced commitment to *OutRun*'s sonic, visual and responsive aspects – "I couldn't think of the game and music as detached, separate things," he tells us – but there's also the fact that Hiroshi Kawaguchi, after working with Suzuki to deliver the excellent *Hang-On* music, was beginning to understand Suzuki's wishes and his way of thinking. We ask Yu Suzuki to reveal his favourite *OutRun* cut and he responds without any hesitation: "*Magical Sound Shower.*"

Aware of all five senses (he has even contemplated the potential for games that challenge players' sense of smell), Yu Suzuki wanted to make *OutRun* a tactile experience – not just something to appeal to the eyes and ears. Hence the cabinet designs he commissioned, which were early examples of coin-op setups capable of delivering force feedback to players at appropriate moments, such as whenever the Testarossa crashed into a roadside signpost. There were four flavours of *OutRun* cab – Deluxe and Standard moving types, an upright with a force feedback wheel only, and a cockpit version without any such movement. The appeal of the jolting DX and SD versions was overwhelming, and after their initial trial runs non-feedback cabinets became relatively rare in Japan. Regardless of the presence/absence of moving parts in these prestigious cabinets, all of them used Nanao-brand monitors. It was essential that *OutRun*'s super-quick sprite-scaling and undulating roads were displayed on the best possible screens, and it was fortuitous that these cabinets were the last wave of Sega machines to use Nanao monitors. As part of a cost-cutting exercise, subsequent Sega coin-ops would use lower-spec Samsung displays – while the Nanao screens would stay bright forever, the later Samsung monitors were prone to screen-burn and visual signs of ageing.

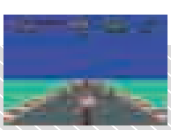
The *OutRun* arcade machines had an unexpected effect on the crowds of players who used to hang out at Japan's game centres; no previous driving game had inspired such dedication. And players went to extraordinary lengths in the pursuit of high scores. Around 1988 it was common in Japan to find *OutRun* machines with broken gearsticks: the so-called 'gear ga-cha' trick – where opportune gear-down/gear-up shifts would be rewarded with a prolonged white-exhaust speed boost – was published in Japan's then-widely read *Gamest* magazine, along with a photo-led guide to explain the intricacies of the move. Arguably the most aggressive of OutRunners were not playing in the intended spirit of the game, but such determined play helped to establish *OutRun* as a phenomenon in the arcades, as well as a commercial success that covered Yu Suzuki's travel expenses many times over.

Yu Suzuki has always been blessed with a clear vision of what he wants, even if – as in the case of the unfinished *Shenmue* saga – he hasn't always managed to get it. But with *OutRun*, Suzuki's vision was realised as perfectly as could have been hoped for, leaving players and its designer and programmer with a supreme, satisfying experience born out of red metal, pastel skies and accelerating away towards the horizon. We'll leave Yu Suzuki with the final word; he deserves it: "*OutRun*'s concept was not about frantically racing to just barely take first place. It's about giving a ride to a beautiful woman, who sits at your side, and driving around in a luxurious car with just one hand on the steering wheel, taking first place in the race by a wide margin – and with time to spare."

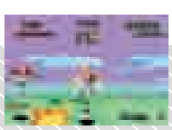




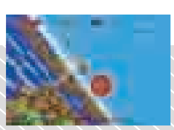
Yu Suzuki Timeline



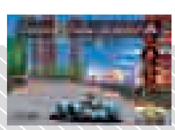
HANG-ON (released 1985; Arcade version pictured)



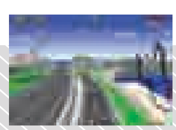
SPACE HARRIER (1985; GBA version pictured)



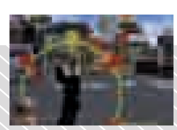
AFTER BURNER II (1987; Arcade version pictured)



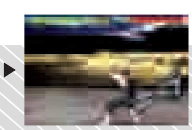
POWER DRIFT (1988; Arcade version pictured)



VIRTUA RACING (1992; Arcade version pictured)



VIRTUA COP (1994; PS2 version pictured)



VIRTUA FIGHTER 2 (1994; Arcade version pictured)



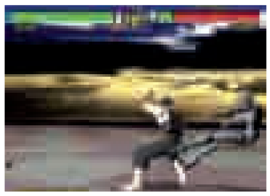
» The open road, a blonde gal at your side, *Magical Sound Shower* playing. Thanks, Yu.

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

SPACE HARRIER
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1985

VIRTUA FIGHTER 2 (PICTURED)
SYSTEMS: ARCADE/SEGA SATURN
YEAR: 1995

SHENMUE
SYSTEM: DREAMCAST
YEAR: 1999

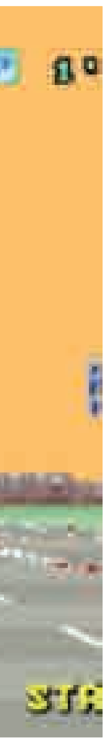


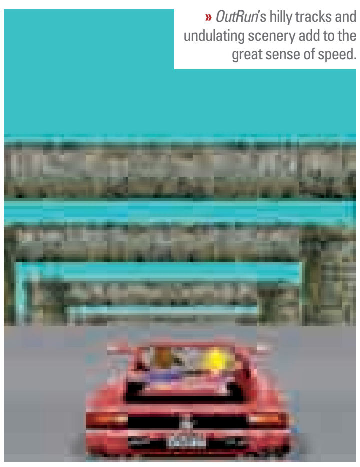
"The main impetus behind OutRun's creation was my love of a film called The Cannonball Run. I thought it would be good to make a game like that"

YU SUZUKI ON HIS FASCINATION WITH THE BURT REYNOLDS FLICK



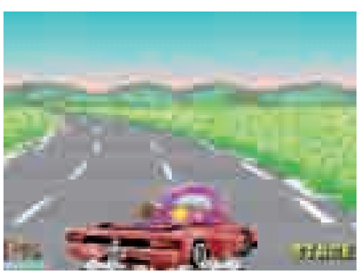
» Decisions, decisions.



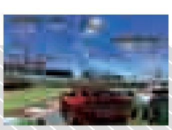


» *OutRun*'s hilly tracks and undulating scenery add to the great sense of speed.

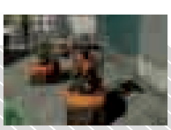




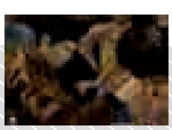




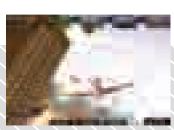
FERRARI F355 CHALLENGE (1999; PS2 version pictured)



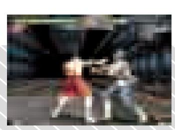
SHENMUE (1999; Dreamcast version pictured)



SHENMUE II (2001; Dreamcast version pictured)



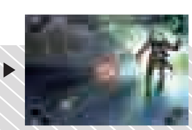
PROPELLER ARENA (unreleased; Dreamcast version pictured)



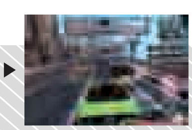
VIRTUA FIGHTER 4 (2001; PS2 version pictured)



OUTRUN 2 (2003; Xbox version pictured)



PSY-PHI (2006; Arcade version pictured)



SEGA RACE TV (2008; Arcade version pictured)

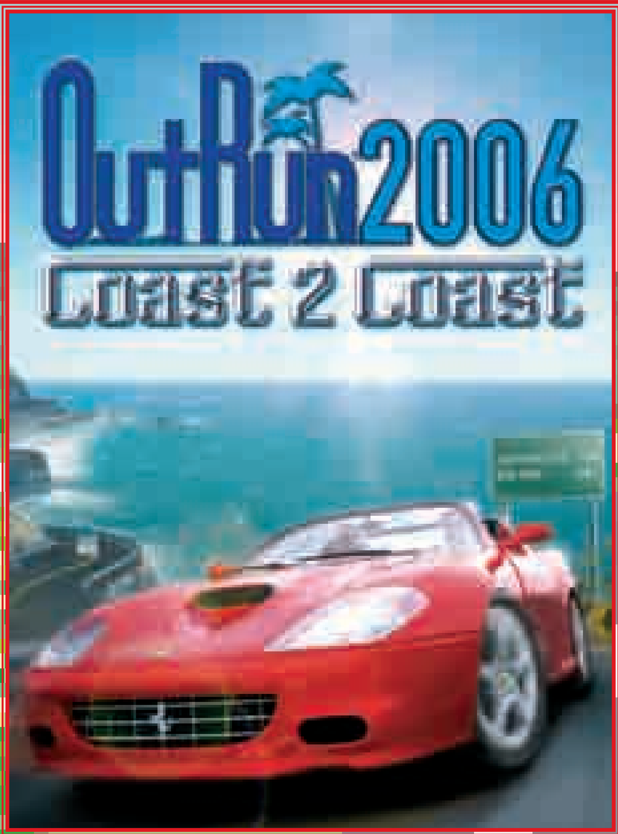
OutRun GALLERY



OutRun (Arcade) Year Released: 1986



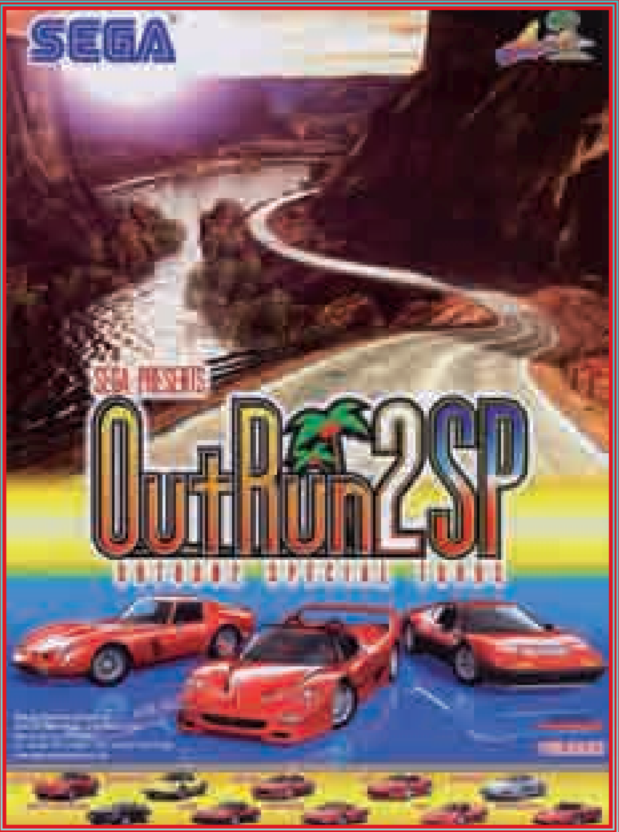
Turbo OutRun (Computer) Year Released: 1990



OutRun 2006 (PSP) Year Released: 2007



OutRun Europa (Computer) Year Released: 1991



OutRun 2 SP (Arcade) Year Released: 2004



Turbo OutRun (Arcade) Year Released: 1989



OutRun (Computer) Year Released: 1988



OutRunners (Arcade) Year Released: 1993


INTELLIVISION

INTELLIVISION



WITH ITS CUTTING-EDGE GRAPHICS AND SOUND, THE INTELLIVISION WAS THE WORLD'S FIRST 16-BIT GAMING CONSOLE AND WORTHY SUCCESSOR TO THE ATARI 2600. ARMED WITH THE GREATEST CONTROLLER EVER, IT TOOK THE WORLD BY STORM, AS THE THIRD REICH COULD HAVE ONLY DREAMED OF DOING. RETRO GAMER EXPLAINS ITS TURBULENT AND CONVOLUTED HISTORY, THE UPS AND DOWNS, ITS BATTLES WON AND LOST IN A COLOURFUL RETROSPECTIVE DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF THE MIGHTY INTELLIVISION

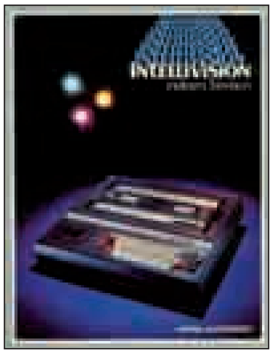
The Intellivision: it epitomised cool elegance and sophistication during the maelstrom days of the videogame revolution in the early Eighties when the gold-disked beauty slogged it out with the mass-marketed Atari 2600.

In a David and Goliath scenario, the Intellivision came armed with more than a slingshot. It was the world's first 16-bit gaming console with a voice synthesizer box and kit allowing it to mutate into a home computer and music studio. It also had a wondrous controller; the best the world has ever seen. Unlike the 2600 with a woefully unresponsive pillbox and daft button as a joystick, the Intellivision came with two keypads that moulded the hand and fingers better than James Wood's bionic-cancer gun in *Videodrome* (1983). Not only did the controller have a number pad and plastic interchangeable overlay, the gaming disc featured 16 positions compared to the 2600's eight. As controllers go, it was sheer gaming nirvana that allowed precise and graceful play.

The majority of the games were light years ahead of the competition: *Utopia* was one of the first 'god' games; *B-17 Bomber* with the Intellivoice offered heart-pounding missions to the heart of the Third Reich dodging flak and enemy fighters; *Mountain Madness: Super Pro Skiing* was blistering racing where opponents did a 'Sonny Bono' by slamming into a tree; *Auto Racing* also had a cameo in TV series *Knight Rider* and *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Cloudy Mountain* would see foolhardy adventurers losing their bowels and being ripped to bits. And there were dodgy third-party games such as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and the saucy XXX romp *Custer's Revenge*, for the more adult orientated gamer. However, such luxury and refinement came at a price when the Intellivision was released in 1980: a hefty $300 ($800 in today's money). But it was worth every cent to have a console with the cutting-edge style and polished power of, say, Alain Delon, compared to the Atari's Vinnie Jones.

The Intellivision's roots stretch back to 1977 when Mattel introduced one of the world's first handheld videogames, and the same year Atari released the VCS, better known as the 2600. In 1978, Mattel began work on the Intellivision in California, and a year later, the console was test marketed with four games. The response to the Atari's new challenger was promising and the Intellivision sold throughout the US with 19 titles reaching sales of 175,000 units. Another competitor to the Intellivision and 2600 was the 8-bit Philips Videopac G7000 that featured an alphabetical keyboard. Despite selling fairly well, shifting over a million units in the US alone throughout the early Eighties, the console was doomed due to a severe lack of third-party support. One of the G7000's better titles was *Satellite Attack*, seen to good effect in the violent cop flick *Order Of Death* (1983), where Harvey Keitel slums it with video junkie and psycho John Lydon aka Johnny Rotten.

To satisfy demand as well as the R&D of new titles, Mattel hired top programmers who sheltered behind the veil of the Blue Sky Rangers in a bid to stop Atari poaching the cream of its talent. With the Intellivision fortified with the best



» Is it a computer? Is it a console? No, it's the Mattel Keyboard Component.

SPECS (MASTER COMPONENT):

CPU: General Instruments CP1610: 16-bit processor @ 894 KHz.

Memory: 7k internal ROM, RAM and I/O structures, remaining 64k address space available for external programs/256-by-8 but static RAM chip (147 bytes optimised for gameplay); 1,325 bytes of RAM; 7,168 bytes of ROM.

Controls: Two hand controllers; 12 button numeric keypad, four action keys, 16 direction movement disc.

Sound: Sound generator capable of producing three-part harmony.

Colour: 64 program-defined 8 by 8 images; 160 pixels wide by 196 pixels high.

Video Resolution: 192 vertical by 160 horizontal picture elements.

INTELLIVISION



» Why don't we ever get advertising like this any more? The mind boggles.

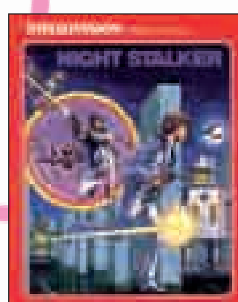


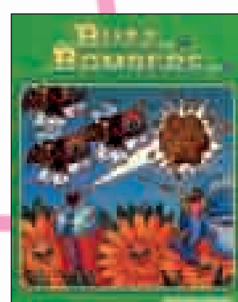
» Early box art was very distinctive and immediately let you know that you were looking at an Intellivision game.

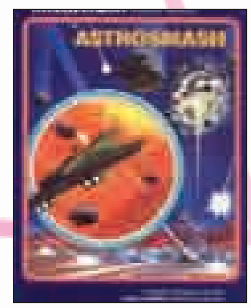


» An early catalogue cover, which demonstrates just how exciting owning an Intellivision could be.









COMMUNITY INTELLIVISION SITES TO WATCH

Intellivision Lives!

www.Intellivisiongames.com

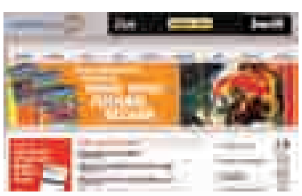
Run by Keith Robinson, who was one of the Blue Sky Rangers and responsible for *Tron: Solar Sailer* and *Shark! Shark!* So he knows his onions. Not only that, the site is lovingly maintained and features lots of facts on the Intellivision. Go look see now.



Intellivision World

www.intellivisionworld.com

English and Italian site that has brochures, instructions and emulators. The hardware section is a joy for Intellivision techies as is the exhaustive rarity and price guide. Apparently one of the more obscure games, *Congo Bongo*, can reach an incredible $839.



Intellivision System

www.intellivisionsystem.com

It's a bit rough round the edges, but this is a fan site from the heart. There are some gems to be found with trivia on games and hardware. Also, there are live links to Intellivision rarities on eBay, which always sounds like a good idea when you return from the pub.



Intellivision Gumbo

www.home.earthlink.net/~classic-videogames/intellivision

One that's hardly going to win prizes for design, the Intellivision Gumbo site has rare and wonderful posters and promotional material from the past. The page on the Intellivision Demonstration Unit – Model 3806 is of interest.





programmers, artists and the cash cow that was Mattel Electronics, the videogame war with the Atari 2600 was going to get real ugly.

In 1981, Mattel invested $6 million in a national ad campaign in direct competition to Atari that compared the graphic power of the Intellivision to the 2600. For the first time in gaming history, the media was whipped into a frenzy, predicting a bitter war between the two giants, and despite being twice as expensive as the 2600, the Intellivision sold over 850,000 units. In what was to be the Intellivision's finest hour in an industry now valued at $1.5 billion, Mattel announced a staggering $100,000,000 profit in 1982. A number of the most popular gaming cartridges sold over a million units and Activision, Imagic and Atari developed their own software for the system, all eager to get a piece of the action.

With 50 titles to go with the system, the Intellivoice was released with three games: *B-17 Bomber*, *Space Spartans* and *Bomb Squad*. A revolution in videogaming, the Intellivoice orchestrated limited but effective speech sampling that could enhance atmospherics. However, despite positive reviews, the Intellivoice bombed with only 300,000 units sold, the remainder gathering dust in warehouses. The fourth title, *Tron: Solar Sailer*, only shifted 90,000 copies and other voice-enhanced games in development such as *Space Shuttle*, *Magic Carousel*, *Convoy* and *Quest* – a promising *Dungeons & Dragons* title – rotted in limbo when the Intellivoice was quietly buried in August 1983. With a $20 million ad campaign starring actor Henry Thomas fresh from Steven Spielberg's *E.T.* (1982), Mattel promoted its latest gadget: the computer keyboard.

Released in limited numbers at a whopping $600, it was powered by 64-bit technology and a secondary CPU when most home computers of the period could only muster 4k to 16k of number crunching power. With a built-in cassette drive and optional connection for a printer, the Intellivision was more than a gaming console but a fully functional home computer. An ambitious but expensive enterprise, the keyboard failed to enthuse the imagination of the public (the keyboard, console and games fetched over $4,000 in a recent eBay auction) and Mattel concentrated on gaming software, hiring over 100 staff. At the end of the year, the console was released in Japan by Bandai and worldwide Christmas sales were strong, despite competition from the new ColecoVision. Sadly, the Intellivision's popularity with the masses was to wane as a gaming depression loomed – the market was saturated with product and there were not enough sales going round for all the companies to survive. The Intellivision's salad days were over.

In 1983, the gold and wood grain Intellivision was superseded by a sleek $150 light grey model in a bid to attract sales – the Intellivision II. Also, the ECS (Entertainment Computer System) hit the shelves. An inexpensive alternative to the computer keyboard, it was limited to a 2k expansion, but the ECS could also be used as a music device with the 49-key synthesizer: gamers could now become budding New Romantics. Yet the ECS was doomed when the Mattel fat cats decided to throw their bucks at gaming software and canned what was a novel piece of equipment. Towards the year's end, 100 Intellivision games were produced and the System Changer module, a cheeky 2600 clone that used the Intellivision for its power, allowed Atari games to be played.



Programmer Ray Kaestner, who originally worked on *Quest*, wrote the code for what is considered a perfect port of the arcade version of *Burger Time* in five months.

A gaming device way ahead of its time was the PlayCable, an adapter that plugged in the cartridge slot of the Intellivision. For $5 a month, it allowed up to 20 games to be downloaded via cable and stored on the machine's RAM. Each month, the games would be rotated and overlays and gaming instructions would be sent to subscribers. However, the PlayCable could not store larger games due to its limited memory and, although popular in the areas that provided the service, it was discontinued in 1983. The year also saw the introduction of the Atari 5200 and the Vectrex, and as games flooded the market, the Intellivision's days as the numero uno were numbered. As a consequence of mass product availability and competition coupled with limited market interest, the industry panicked and collapsed. Smaller companies threw in the towel and the big boys tightened their purse strings. The Intellivision II was sold off for $69 and Mattel sacked two-thirds of its programming staff with a record loss of $300 million. Suffice to say, plans for the Intellivision IV Master Component with 3D graphics and modem that let two players engage together over a phone line were canned.

In 1984, Mattel shut the doors on its gaming business and sold the Intellivision to INTV Corp who continued to flog the console although the videogame industry was at that time presumed dead in the water. As stock dried up, the company produced the INTV System III in 1985, which was in essence the original Intellivision, sometimes sold as the Super Pro System. The NES was released in the mid-Eighties and its success enthused INTV to hire former Intellivision staff to complete unfinished Mattel games as well as republish older but popular titles. With sales of 10,000 to 20,000 units, turnover was low but profitable as INTV were a barebones operation. As the Atari 7800 and the 8-bit Master System sales proved encouraging, INTV announced the INTV System IV but it was never released. Based on the Intellivision III Master Component from 1983 (which was also unreleased), the System IV was rushed into development to compete with the ColecoVision with high-resolution games (320x192 pixels) and a built-in Intellivoice. In 1988, the writing was on the wall for the ageing Intellivision. Stores ceased trading with INTV and the company developed software for the NES, finally filing for bankruptcy in 1990, its remaining stock dumped in cheap stores such as Tandy/Radio Shack.

But the Intellivision refused to die and it lives on. The original Blue Sky Rangers, pioneered by Keith Robinson, formed Intellivision Lives! in 1995 and the ex-Mattel Electronics boffins and programmers obtained exclusive rights to the console and its entire catalogue of games. Due to public demand for retro gaming in an age where modern games are coated in high-gloss graphics but suffocate in a vacuum of zero gameplay, there is a growing trend for Intellivision software from veteran players to noobs alike attracted to the system's simple yet accessible titles. Thanks to Intellivision Lives!, PC and Mac emulated versions of games are marketed, as are games for mobile phones published by THQ Wireless. Direct-to-TV units and greatest hits packages, T-shirts and mugs brandishing the Intellivision logo of choice are available as is *Intellivision In Hi-Fi*, a CD of the catchiest tunes from the games. So now there's no excuse not to whistle along to the insanely infectious score to *Snafu* while zipping down the motorway.

Indeed, in its three decades of gaming popularity, the Intellivision remains true to its core: intelligent television. With over 125 titles produced and about 3.5 million consoles sold, the Intellivision continues to draw a wealth of gamers attracted to the brand, the games and its components that pushed technological boundaries from a gaming machine to one of an advanced home computer. And where the competition has now been buried under the sands of time, the future of the Intellivision is bright and cheerful. And as the strap line for the Intellivision Lives! website states bold and proud – 'Blocky after all these years.' Yeah baby, you had better believe it!



SPECS (MASTER COMPONENT AND KEYBOARD COMPONENT COMBINED):

Memory: 16k RAM resident (10 bit) words memory can be expanded to more than 1000 8k pages (8 megabytes).

Keyboard: 60 key typewriter keyboard.

Tape Cassette Drive: Built-in completely computer controlled. Records/plays two digital and two audio tracks in one direction. 30 minutes of program material and data storage.

Video Resolution: Standard: 192 vertical picture by 160 horizontal elements. High-resolution alphanumerics: 24 lines of 40 characters.

Expandability: Two parallel peripheral I/O expansion ports, which allow addition of external memory, peripherals, plus access to CPU bus.

Potential Peripherals: Telephone modem, voice synthesizer and printer.

Credits:Thanks to Keith Robinson and Henry 'E.T.' Thomas; the latter a Retro Gamer drinking partner who couldn't be bothered to be associated with the Intellivision now that he's all grown up. Cheers, mate. © Jay Slater/1 July 2008

INTELLIVISION



PERFECT TEN GAMES

Sleek, stylish and with those innovative looking controllers, Mattel's Intellivision proved more than a match for Atari's 2600. Supported by a host of great games, it was rather tricky choosing our ten favourites, but with any luck you'll hopefully agree with our final ten choices…



01

B-17 BOMBER

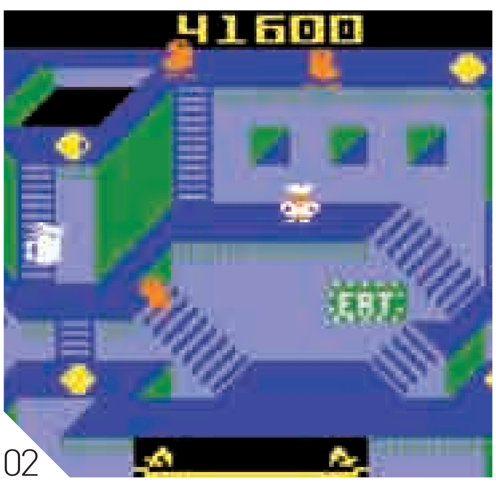
- » **RELEASED:** 1982
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** MATTEL ELECTRONICS
- » **CREATED BY:** MATTEL
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** ASTROSMASH

01 **A rather neat** little game this one. *B-17 Bomber* has you playing the role of a steadfast pilot whose job it is to take out various Nazi targets across mainland Europe by (ironically) waving a black cross over them and pressing a button to release your bombs. Yes, the idea of *B-17 Bomber* might sound silly and a bit simplistic, but the game was pretty innovative for its day, and it doesn't look too shabby either. The most novel aspects of *B-17 Bomber* are the multiple camera angles that could be accessed brilliantly by turning the dial, and the scary inhuman warnings that crackled from the Intellivision's pant-destroying voice box peripheral that warned you of upcoming hazards and targets that you had to eradicate.

DINER

- » **RELEASED:** 1987
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** INTV CORPORATION
- » **CREATED BY:** REALTIME
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** TOWER OF DOOM

02 **The Intellivision is** renowned for its appetite for tasty arcade conversions and while *Burger Time* can stand tall as one of its tastiest looking, feeling and… erm… sounding, *Diner* – it's Intelli-exclusive unofficial sequel – just edges its way onto this list. Smooth feeling and gorgeous looking, thanks to its brilliant faux-3D look, *Diner* had you help something that looks like the Pillsbury Doughboy make a sub sandwich by kicking things that are referred to as 'Food Balls' into a large roll at the base of the screen. To make sandwich prepping more hazardous, you also had to avoid the deathly touch of frankfurter guys, animated bananas and frothy cappuccinos (or are they ale tankards?) by peppering them with pepper spray.



02

DONKEY KONG JR

- » **RELEASED:** 1983
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** COLECO
- » **CREATED BY:** NINTENDO
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** DONKEY KONG

03 **Given that the** Intellivision version of *Donkey Kong* was considered – after first viewing by Mattel – to be an attempt by Coleco to try to sabotage its machine, it wouldn't be unfair to say that there wasn't a lot riding on this game being anything other than another botched assassination attempt. However, surpassing the original in every way, *DK Jr* is a colourful and smooth Intelli title that shows what the machine is capable of. So Jumpman looks like a Smurf, Kong like Swamp Thing and DK Junior that 'munkey' from Johnny Vegas's ads, but nonetheless there's still some faithful arcade gameplay to be found lurking in here.

LOCK 'N' CHASE

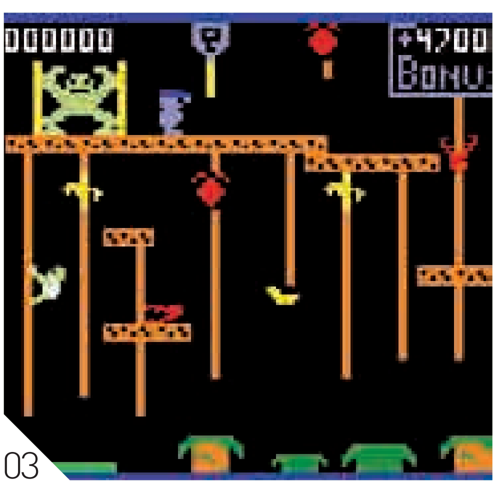
- » **RELEASED:** 1982
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** MATTEL ELECTRONICS
- » **CREATED BY:** MATTEL
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** ARMOR BATTLE

04 **This port of** *Pac-Man* is brilliant, far better than the atrocious 2600 port. Now it's important to mention that *Lock 'N' Chase* isn't necessarily better than *Pac-Man*, but it provides a novel twist on the gameplay ethos and it was native to the machine, too. *Lock 'N' Chase* has you playing a colourful bank-robbing tomato who must avoid capture by a patrolling group of primary coloured police. It is a little more claustrophobic than *Pac-Man* and feels more frantic, but to make evasion easier you had the advantage of being able to close doors behind you to slow down the law enforcers.

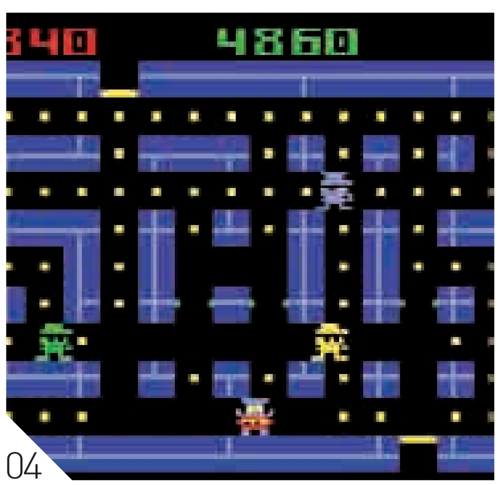
Q*BERT

- » **RELEASED:** 1983
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** PARKER BROS
- » **CREATED BY:** GOTTLIEB
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** REACTOR

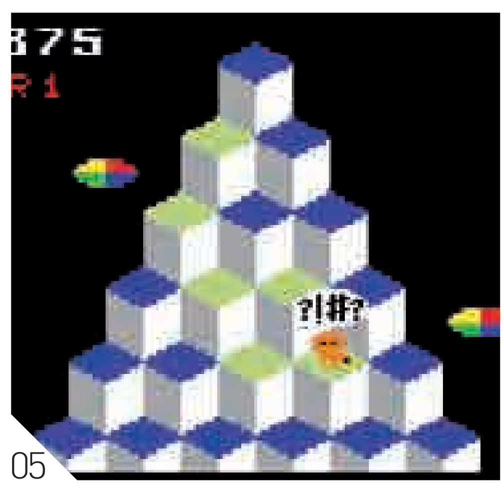
05 **For arcade faithfulness** this is probably as good as it got for the Intellivision, and there's no shame in that because *Q*bert* is a tour de force for the machine. While it's not without its faults and niggles (like forcing you to press the reset button every time a game ends) what's here looks, feels and plays a lot like the arcade machine. Excelling in the audio and visual department, fans of the arcade will come to appreciate how Parker came to wholesale nearly all of the elements and enemies from the arcade game for this home port while somehow not making the game look like a poorly decorated Christmas tree.



03

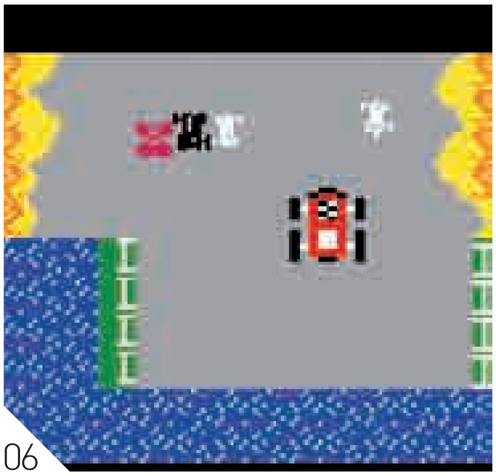


04



05

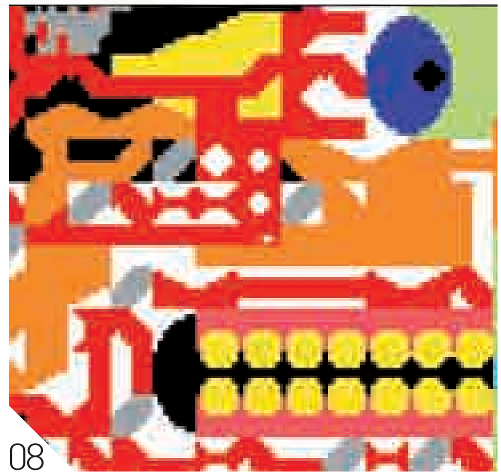




06



07



08

BUMP 'N' JUMP

- » **RELEASED:** 1982
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** MATTEL ELECTRONICS
- » **CREATED BY:** DATA EAST
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** RING KING

06 **Another quality arcade** conversion that might look a little incredulous, but it somehow remains pretty faithful to the original. Gorgeous looking and great fun, *Bump 'N' Jump* is a colourful riot of racing. The game has you bumping and jumping onto opposing cars, clearing overpasses in the track and tacking in some incredibly sunny looking visuals (that change with the seasons) to rescue your kidnapped gal. The game's music and sound effects are also sublime and suit the look of the game brilliantly. So if you're a fan of Data East's early jostle racer then you'll find a lot to like in this impressive Intelli version.

DRACULA

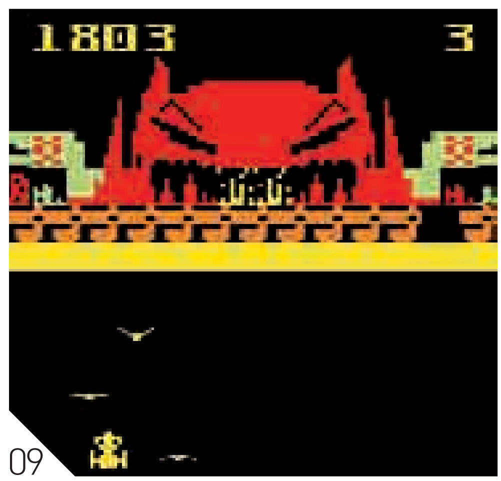
- » **RELEASED:** 1983
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** IMAGIC
- » **CREATED BY:** IMAGIC
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SWORDS AND SERPENTS

07 **Okay, here's another** game that makes it onto our list because it's well loved by collectors and is exclusive to the machine. The first thing that strikes you about *Dracula* is how great it looks; the second is how much depth and interaction there is. The idea is simple; you play the titular Prince of Darkness and must avoid a biting by patrolling werewolves and gorge on the necks of townsfolk before sunrise. You could turn yourself into a bat, turn street denizens into zombies (and control them with the second pad) and play knock-door-run and watch the homeowners do all the running. Nothing complicated here, but what there is is presented brilliantly.

MICROSURGEON

- » **RELEASED:** 1982
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** IMAGIC
- » **CREATED BY:** IMAGIC
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** ICE TREK

08 **We admit this** isn't one of the best games on the machine, but for its day it was certainly post modern. This hideous screenshot is how you'd look had you played the part of Jennifer Jason Leigh in *The Hitcher*. It's your internal organs spliced in half and painted in the style of epilepsy, and it provided the backdrop for *Microsurgeon*. You play a tiny probe swimming through gastric acid and organs to repel infections, disease and tumours. As you free roam the body, cleverly travelling through the blood stream makes you move quicker. Given its slow pacing, the game itself isn't amazing, but its uniqueness makes it popular among collectors.



09

DEMON ATTACK

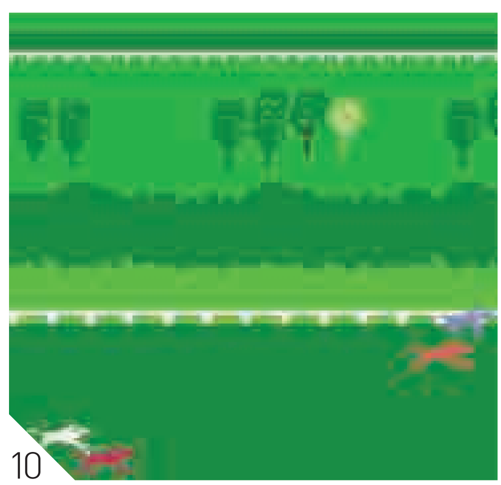
- » **RELEASED:** 1982
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** IMAGIC
- » **CREATED BY:** IMAGIC
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SAFECRACKER

09 **This was a** really difficult decision; it was a toss-up between this and *Defender*. Both are fantastic games, both tear shreds into the Atari ports (especially *Defender*). However, *Demon Attack* just pips it to the post. Why? Well just look at it. It's a beautiful looking version, it has detailed backdrop graphics of the moon's surface and the Earth in the distance (giving us a nice reminder of what it is we're actually fighting for). The most notable extra the Intellivision port had over the Atari version, however, was the inclusion of the arcade game's impressive mothership; a gargantuan demonic-looking base that manages to smother half of the screen, it proves an epic foe to topple and looked amazing.

HORSE RACING

- » **RELEASED:** 1980
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** MATTEL ELECTRONICS
- » **CREATED BY:** MATTEL
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** KOOL-AID MAN

10 **A fantastically quirky** game, *Horse Racing* does exactly what it promises to do: allow you to bet on horses. And unless you're a betting man (or woman) that might sound as appealing as running into traffic, but like a lot of these Intellivision games we're finding that when you actually scratch at their surface they're usually fantastically well put together, and *Horse Racing* is one such title. In its heart it's probably best appreciated as a multiplayer game, it's essentially one of those Kentucky Derby machines you occasionally see hanging out with the 2p machines in the arcades. You and six pals can have a flutter on the 'gee gees' and even get to try to influence the result with the aid of some severe whip-lashing. Great fun.



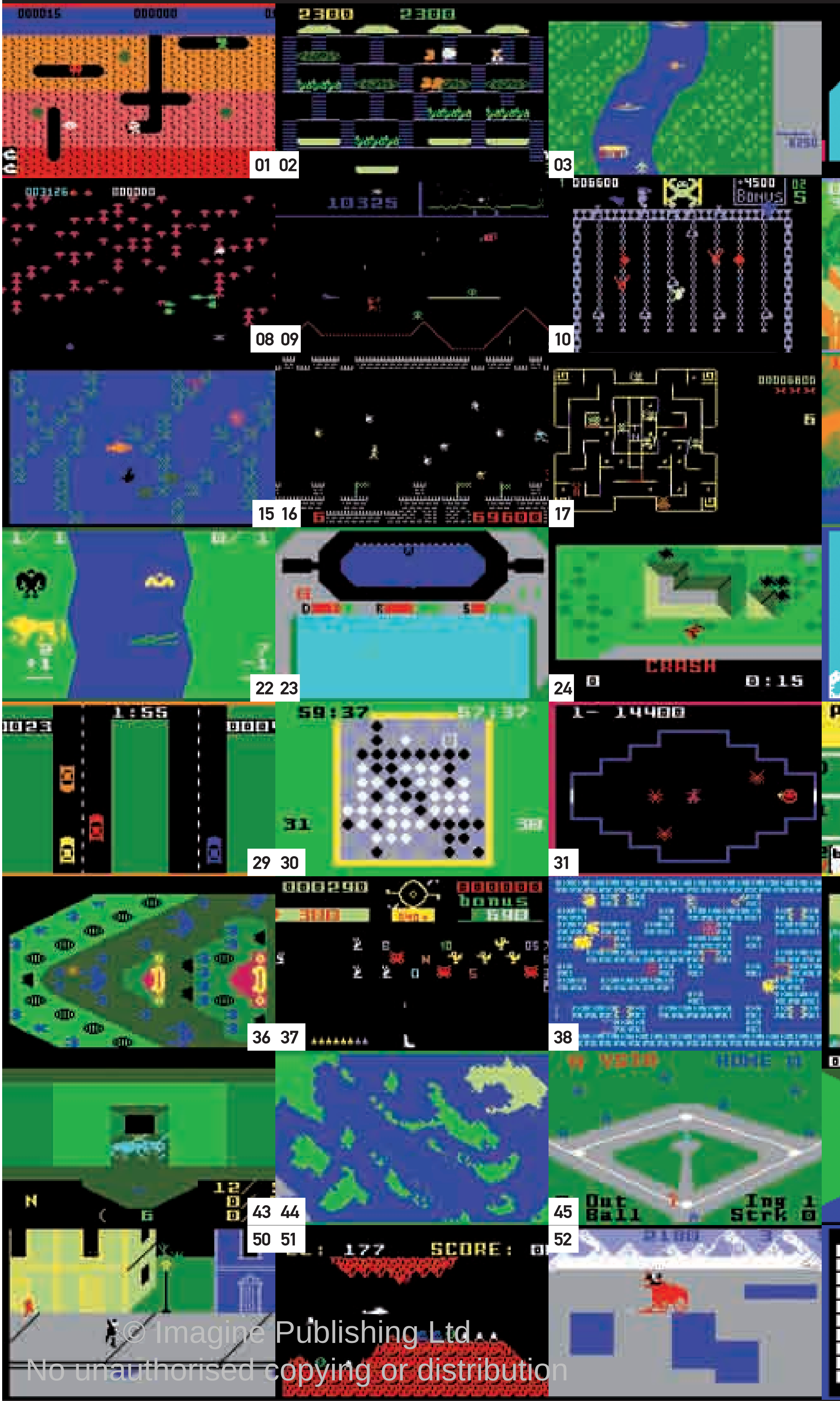
10

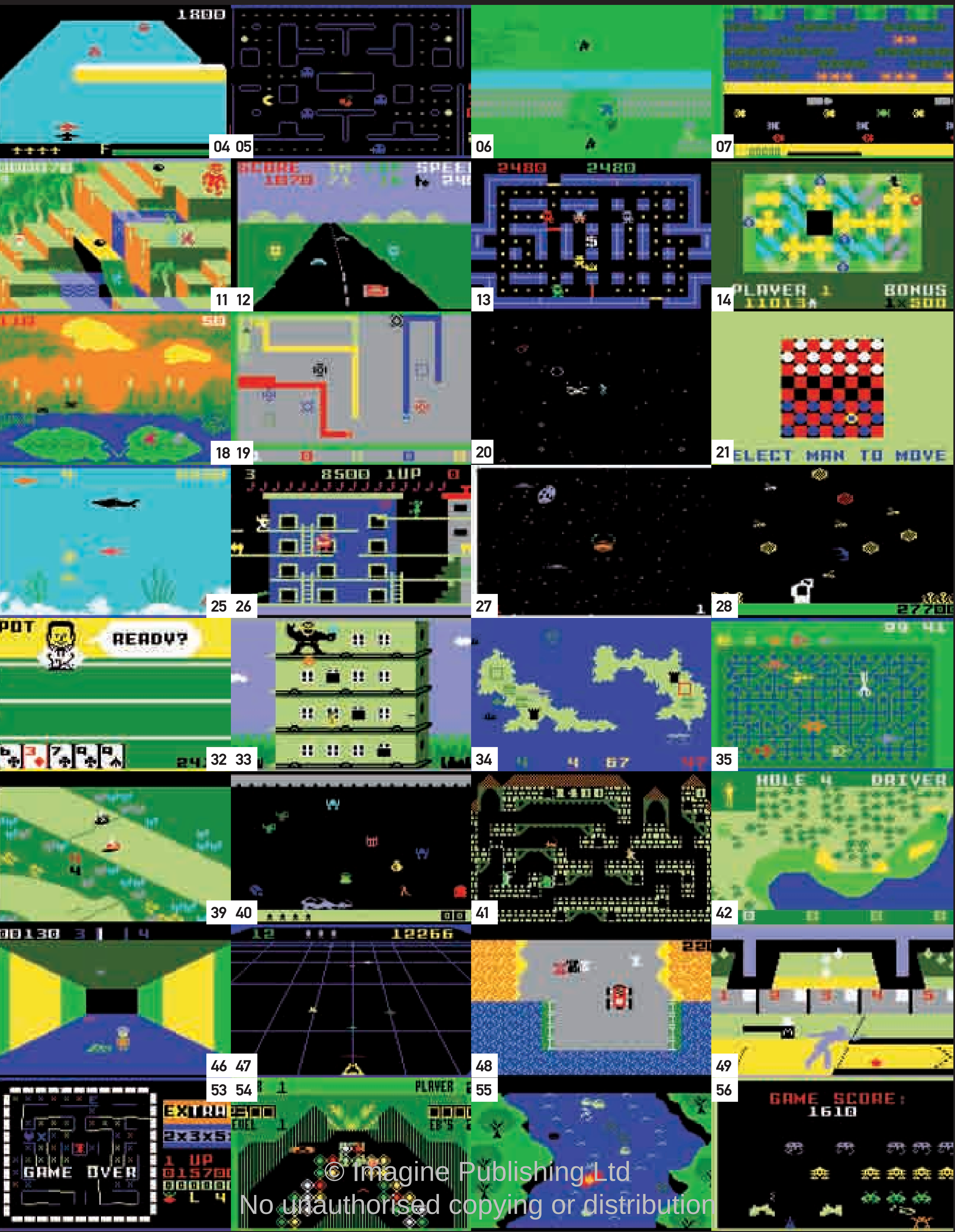
INTELLIVISION

and the rest…

Many Intellivision owners will claim Mattel's machine was far superior to Atari's 2600. Why not look at the screens on the following spread and judge for yourselves?

01 DIG DUG
02 BURGER TIME
03 RIVER RAID
04 ZAXXON
05 PAC-MAN
06 COMMANDO
07 FROGGER
08 CENTIPEDE
09 DEFENDER
10 DONKEY KONG
11 CONGO BONGO
12 POLE POSITION
13 LOCK 'N' CHASE
14 HAPPY TRAILS
15 FATHOM
16 MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE: THE POWER OF HE-MAN
17 MOUSE TRAP
18 FROG BOG
19 SNAFU
20 SPACE HAWK
21 CHECKERS
22 THE ELECTRIC COMPANY: MATH FUN
23 SUB HUNT
24 AUTO RACING
25 SHARK! SHARK!
26 POPEYE
27 SPACE BATTLE
28 BUZZ BOMBERS
29 TRIPLE ACTION
30 REVERSI
31 VENTURE
32 LAS VEGAS POKER & BLACKJACK
33 BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
34 UTOPIA
35 BOMB SQUAD
36 DREADNAUGHT FACTOR
37 CARNIVAL
38 TUTANKHAM
39 MOTOCROSS
40 DRAGONFIRE
41 THUNDER CASTLE
42 PGA GOLF
43 ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS: TREASURE OF TARMIN
44 SEA BATTLE
45 MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL
46 SEWER SAM
47 BEAMRIDER
48 BUMP 'N' JUMP
49 PBA BOWLING
50 DRACULA
51 SUPER COBRA
52 THIN ICE
53 LADY BUG
54 VECTRON
55 WHITE WATER!
56 SPACE ARMADA




04 05
06
07
11 12
13
14
PLAYER 1
BONUS
18 19
20
21
ELECT MAN TO MOVE
25 26
8500 1UP
27
28
READY?
32 33
34
35
39 40
41
HOLE 4
DRIVER
42
46 47
12266
48
49
53 54
55
56
EXTRA
GAME OVER
1 UP
PLAYER
GAME SCORE:
1610

RETRO SHAMER

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BIONIC GRANNY

IT'S BEEN CROPPING UP IN OUR SHAMER POLL SINCE WE FIRST PUT IT TO THE VOTE, AND EACH MONTH IT COMES A CLOSE SECOND. PIPPED EVERY TIME BY A YOUNGER (BUT NOT NECESSARILY SHODDIER) TITLE. FINALLY IT MAKES IT INTO RETRO SHAMER; FINALLY STUART HUNT GETS TO SEE WHAT THE FUSS IS ABOUT; FINALLY WE GET TO TUCK BIONIC GRANNY INTO BED AND PUT A PILLOW OVER HER FACE



» If you like your grandmother, C64, or sanity, you should avoid *Bionic Granny* at all costs.



» This is the game, one screen of turgid granny bashing. Sick stuff!

IN THE KNOW



» **PUBLISHER:** MASTERTRONIC
» **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
» **RELEASED:** 1984
» **GENRE:** CATCH-'EM-UP
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** EXACTLY £1.99 (CIRCA 1984)
» **WHY PLAY THIS WHEN YOU CAN PLAY:** A SECOND-HAND RECORDER





» We failed to find any logic behind the scoring system… not that it would have made much difference.

POINTLESS PART

We played this game for a whole ten minutes before reviewers from other pods starting hurling bricks and bottles at us, aggressively forcing us to turn the pile of crap off. So forgive us if we're missing a trick here, but from the time we spent with *Bionic Granny,* there seems to be no rhyme or reason to where one stage ends and another begins.



Bionic Granny is the type of videogame that will make you seriously question your own worth. Even if you are a multi-millionaire playboy and married to Holly Valance, you will continually ask yourself 'Am I really playing this?' before coming to the conclusion that you are, in fact, an idiot, and then considering what kind of gun must have been held to the heads of the Darling Brothers when they created this catastrophic piece of software. Something big and mankind-threatening we suspect, for there can be no other justification for releasing this bemusing Commodore 64 game-type thingy into the public arena.

Bad videogames fall into one of two categories. The first group encompasses those lazy, piss-poor titles such as *Superman 64,* a game which, it could be argued – given the popularity of the subject matter and the power of the hardware – is a far worse crime on humanity than any game you might care to mention. But wait, don't forget we said there are two categories of bad game. There are also those titles that are an unfortunate rhapsody of graphics and sound built around a doomed idea. It is among this second classification that you will find the likes of *Bionic Granny.*

We never thought we'd live to hear ourselves say this, but *Bridge It* – a game that involves pressing any button on a keyboard to lower a family of bridges so that a single skipping jerk can walk across them without exploding – is a more accomplished game than *Bionic Granny.* Heck, MS-DOS is a more accomplished videogame than *Bionic Granny.* Come to think of it, we've encountered many an Amiga loading screen with more variety, entertainment value, and better sound quality than that of *Bionic Granny.*

It seems the whole plot of the game centres on a fantastical ongoing war between lollipop ladies and stick-waving child-hating cybernetic cadavers. Supplanting you in the oil-stained grey stockings of the titular Bionic Granny, it's your job to beat up a load of smiling lollygaggers as they leave school while also avoiding the deathly signalling instruments of a heroic lollipop lady who looks like a demented lacrosse player. And that's the game. Avoid lollipops; hurt children.

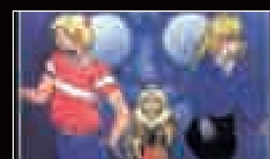
And there really is no rationalisation for this hatred of children. Check out the clock in the screenshots, it reads four o'clock, so it's not like the kids are playing truant or staying out after dark. And anyway, why would an upstanding member of the road-crossing community try to fend off an old woman with a stop sign if she wasn't evil, bionic, demented, or a combination of all three?

There are no two ways about it, the graphics in *Bionic Granny* are grotesque. You can see for yourself that the dim, grey, single-screen world looks as though it was measured and drawn by aggressive school children. The location comprises a school that resembles a bar of chocolate, a football pitch that has been drawn in milk, and a green square with a clock balancing on top. Leading out of the school are three roadways all of which point in the same direction – that'll be down. Eventually, larged-headed children begin to stampede out of the school gates in their droves, all trying to find their way home before the maniacal mechanical pensioner rams a walking stick into their eye socket and stamps on their faces all the while cackling with gleeful menace.

And as if the premise wasn't scary enough, when Bionic Granny gets struck by a rogue lollipop, she falls to the ground in an unnecessary two-step death animation as a threateningly demonic face relinquishes its grip on her frail bones and hovers forebodingly over her lifeless corpse. It's the kind of game that gives grandmothers a bad name and impressionable young souls wet sheets.

When all's said and done, *Bionic Granny* lacks any artistic merit whatsoever. In fact, if you accidentally stuck this game inside a tape player and pressed Record, you would not be angered by your clumsiness.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS



Turd! That's the first impression of this game. Two kids, who dress like jerks, running away from an elderly lady while an apparition of a demon with a bear trap for a mouth fills the screen. We're not sure whether that's a laser gun in granny's hand or simply her blood-soaked dress after bludgeoning her victims to a red fleshy mess. Note this game is part of Mastertronic's £1.99 range – making it about seven thousand pounds over valued.

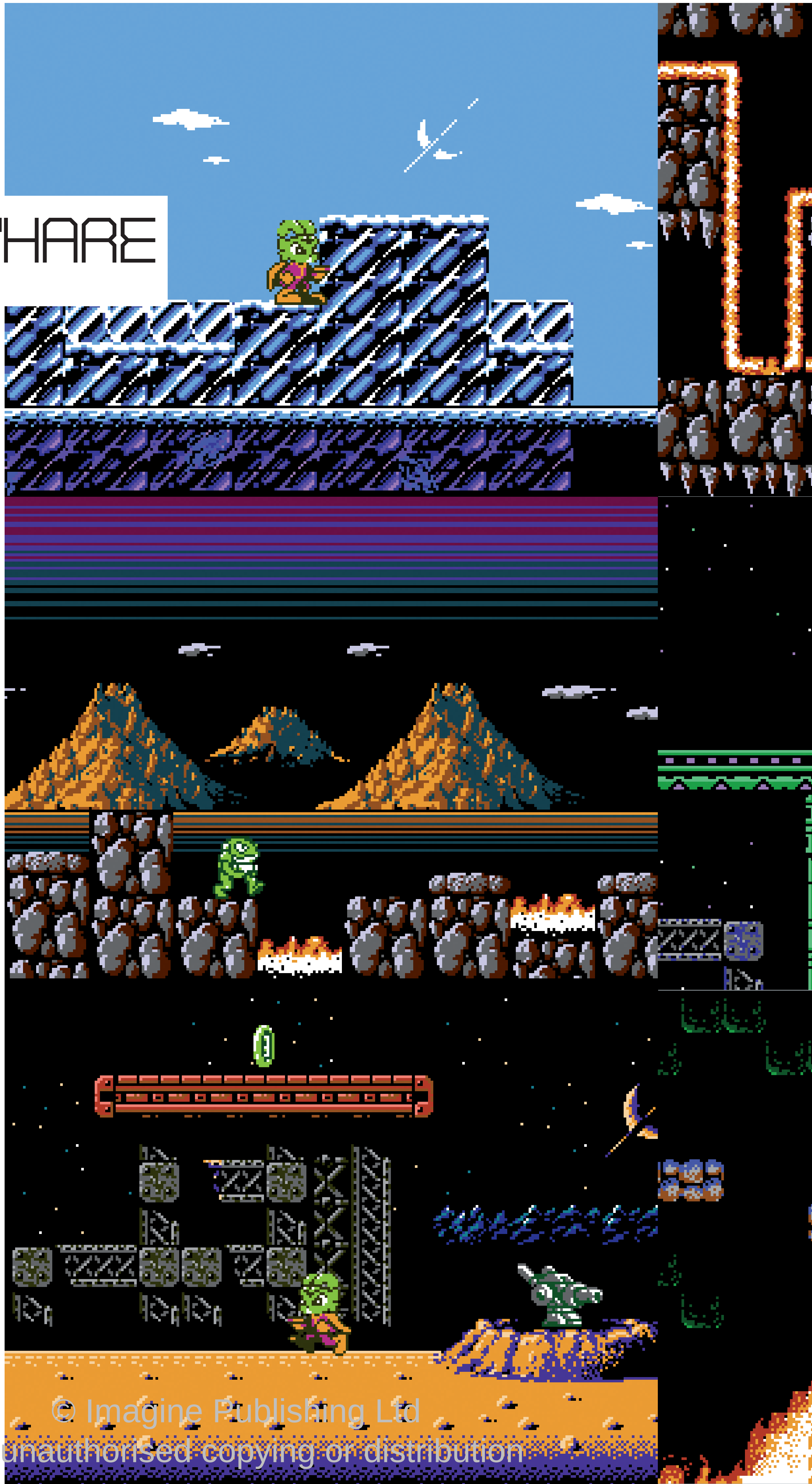
A WORD FROM THE MAIN CHARACTER

"Bzzt, Crash, &*$% & I have been built to seek out and to destroy the rogue agent Tucker Jenkins, a petulant child star who will lead a human resistance to fight against my current employer Pie-net. We can't let him succeed in preventing Judgement Day. Regrettably, I have no picture of the boy so I will be forced to eradicate every single cast member of *Grange Hill,* even Pogo Patterson, by hanging outside the BBC and waiting for them all to finish work at 4pm. Trying to stop me is futile, my only weakness is the touch of large metal signs shaped like lollipops, and I figure you pathetic humans have no such things on your crumby little planet."**



BUCKY O'HARE

KONAMI GETS BUCKED!





- » **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI
- » **RELEASED:** 1993
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORM
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** NES
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** A FEW QUID



HISTORY

There was a time when Konami could do no wrong in my eyes. Through the mid-Nineties a game from the house of… erm… Snake usually meant arcadey gameplay, pick-up-and-play controls, colourful sprites and bags of cartoon playability.

But Konami also knew how to get the best out of a licence or six. *Turtles*, *Batman Returns*, *The Simpsons*, *X-Men*, *Asterix* and *Bucky O'Hare* were all given great gaming treatments by Konami. Now, *Bucky O'Hare* was a cartoon series that I never really warmed to as a kid. It was too *Buck Rogers* (no doubt the inspiration) for my liking. It also starred a hero that looked a little like a cross between a bogey and Sgt Pepper, which, despite being a fan of The Beatles even at that young age, was just not as cool as a giant robot that transformed into a juggernaut, or turtle mutant teenage ninjas. However, despite not knowing any of the character arcs or why I was even bothering with a game about a cartoon series that didn't appeal to me, I would boot it up anyway and be admirably impressed.

A neat rhapsody of platform and run-'n'-gun gameplay greeted me, and surprisingly – given Konami's track record for delivering tortuous bullet-eating adversaries in its *Contra* series – the difficulty in the game would come assailing from the fussy and wildly erratic platform sections that Konami would fuse into the game. A tricky mine cart section, a stage that saw you leaping from the roofs of enemy spacecrafts, basically negotiating the most deadliest videogame terrain imaginable, meant platform game savants would be in their element. The boss battles where unmistakably Konami though. Remembering attack patterns and utilising Bucky's nifty charge jump to clear the trundling end-of-level guardians were order of the day.

So don't be fooled by *Bucky*'s kid-appeasing aesthetics readers, behind the chipper-looking visuals and ridiculously long health bar is a game that boons a real challenge.





DEVELOPER LOOKBACK

AFTER STARTING OFF SMALL IN THE ARCADES, KONAMI SOON LAUNCHED INTO A LUCRATIVE DEAL WITH NINTENDO THAT SAW IT BECOME A MAJOR PLAYER ON THE NES. THE GOOD TIMES WEREN'T TO LAST THOUGH, WITH KONAMI FACING A DIFFICULT TIME IN THE NINETIES, AS MIKE TOOLEY EXPLAINS…

Konami (PART 2)



Konami mapped the Eighties with milestone games; each one a synopsis of the time it was created, from *Frogger* to *Scramble* to *Castlevania*. The genre-creating Konami had a quality title for all tastes, but while the videogames crash of the Eighties presented Konami with opportunity, to be successful in the Nineties and beyond would be all about software and innovation. Something Konami would eventually have in spades.

With the lineage that Konami had created throughout the Eighties, it is difficult to find context for the problems it encountered in the early Nineties. To create a perspective Konami has to be viewed globally at this point. The core of Konami's business was the arcade operation that generated much of the company's revenue. Despite the huge success of the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* arcade machine, there was no escaping the fact that arcade revenues were dwindling; so a stellar performance from one title failed to generate the incomes that four or five average titles would have generated in the mid-Eighties.

The home markets on the other hand posed a very different challenge for Konami. The MSX was stalling in Japan as it approached the end of its natural life, while in Europe, the 8-bits were breathing their last breaths, meaning a reduction in licensing fees for conversions appearing in the West. This left Nintendo as Konami's biggest outlet for its software.

Konami, despite being a favoured developer of Nintendo, would suffer due to Nintendo's determination to persevere with the NES and hold back the release of the incoming SNES. A gentleman's agreement had seen the creation of Ultra Games, allowing Konami to provide a route to market for non-Nintendo licensees such as EA and unthinkably today, Rare, while letting Konami deliver more than the five titles a year to Nintendo's veteran console



Devil World is obscure, but surprisingly fun to play through.



Wild West C.O.W. Boys Of Moo Mesa. A bovine *Sunset Riders*.



The *Dance Dance* series is still massively popular.

KONAMI INSTANT EXPERT

The Konami e-Amusement system lets arcade players play with gamers across Japan, with user IDs and rankings. This technology is being trialled in the US and Europe.

Konami currently has 310 health and fitness studios across Japan, there are plans to take this brand global.

Konami is running a Bemani competition through the Japanese arcades. Using the e-Amusement Pass, players can compete against each other locally before being picked as the top-eight players to represent their country.

In 2000, Konami introduced the *Tokimeki Memorial* fund. The fund raised ¥770 million in 2000 for a new version of *Tokimeki Memorial*, a role-playing love-story game that was introduced in 1995. In the game, the player has to win the heart of a schoolgirl by choosing from several phrases to ask her for a date. The fund that Konami sold takes the form of a foreign registered investment trust that is sold to Japanese residents in yen. The foreign registry confers tax advantages. Investors buy the fund in units of ¥10,000, with a minimum investment of ¥100,000. The funds raised are slated to develop and sell the third of the *Tokimeki Memorial* series and another love-simulation game designed for girls. A matrix drawn up by the company determines the level of return the investor receives. Roughly speaking, investors receive more than they invested if both games sell more than 200,000 copies each. Meanwhile, their loss is capped at ¥5,000 per ¥10,000 investment. The game sold 170,000 units in its first six months, going on to sell over 300,000.

Despite being one of the company's best franchises the *Silent Hill* that we play has been heavily censored. There were two versions of *Silent Hill 2* developed, both finished but only one was released, *Silent Hill 3* had a joke ending with aliens that wasn't intended, and *Silent Hill 4* wasn't a *Silent Hill* game at all, but a new title baring similarities, that was rewritten to fit the franchise.

In 1991, Konami became one of the few developers permitted to bring Mario to the masses. With the Japanese-only release of *Mario Roulette*. This more than any other game demonstrated Konami's relationship with Nintendo, given the potency of Mario in the early Nineties.

In 2004, Konami won a court case against the French FA, who had licensed the French national team and leagues to the French Football Promotion lobby. As the deal was signed in the Eighties, Konami argued that the inability to licence the team's copyright properly contravened antitrust laws. Konami won and the FFF was required to accept tender for the licensing of their copyrights.

Konami has just announced record profits of £246 million for year end 2008, this doesn't include any sales from *MGS4*. It has set a much higher target for the year 2008/2009.

that most companies were allowed to produce. In a meeting some years before, it had been agreed between Yamauchi Hiroshi (the then-Nintendo CEO) and Yoshinobu Nakama, Hiro Matsuda and Shokichi Ishihara (Konami's founders) that Konami would not publish games for anyone directly in competition with Nintendo. The MSX and European 8-bits were excluded from this agreement, but Sega's Master System, which would have provided Konami with a much-needed new market did fall foul.

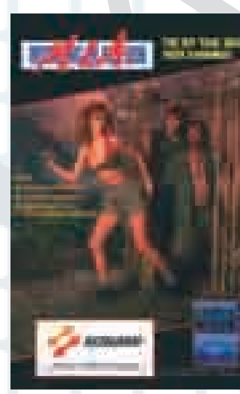
Konami found itself in the unenviable position of being solely equipped to facilitate dwindling markets. Yamauchi Hiroshi told *RePlay* magazine in 1990: "The next years will be difficult for many in the industry, especially Konami, we make games but don't always accomplish our aims, we have ideas and knowledge but for now though we must find a way to allow players to embrace our ideas." At a Konami board meeting in early 1990, Hiro Matsuda convinced the board to pursue the licensing of properties that had served them so well with the *Turtles* arcade game.

Most notably, in 1990 Konami would release *Aliens* to the arcade. The game became an instant hit and saw Cameron's sci-fi classic being retold in a 2D setting, with the odd forced 3D set piece. Other arcade games failed to find a niche though, although in Japan much was made of the release of *Parodius*, a heady parody of *Gradius* and Japanese culture. However, it wouldn't be until the later home versions that *Parodius* would make a mark as a game in its own right.

Metal Gear Solid would prove a case in point to underline Konami's fragmentation at this point in time. In Japan, *Solid Snake* was released as the *Metal Gear* sequel on the MSX, while in the US, the NES was home to *Snake's Revenge* also a *Metal Gear* sequel. Two games, both different purporting to be the same, tailored to different territories and released on different formats. While *Super Contra* and *Castlevania III* would go some way to bolster sales for the home, it was the home version of *Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles* that restored some sense of success to the year. The game made use of Nintendo Memory Management chips, to bring the arcade experience home. This in itself showed how tenuous Konami was at the time; it had spent the Eighties stripping games for home release, now it was throwing everything that it could at a title to ensure quality. Banking on the economics of scale, the additional cartridge manufacture cost would be absorbed by the sheer volume of sales.

Handheld titles on the other hand showed slow returns. Even when Konami released its first sports licensed title for the Game Boy in the shape of *NFL Football*, the fanfare and reception were less than inspiring. The next few years would be quiet for Konami, despite relative success with *Lethal Enforcers* and *The Simpsons* in the arcade. Konami was struggling to find an identity and it was difficult to bring these games home, the machines in people's homes weren't powerful enough for *Lethal Enforcers* and the licence for *The Simpsons* prevented Konami releasing the game on anything other than a computer; gamers the world over knew Konami for different things dependent on the territory that they lived in. Many of its releases were sequels to established games and there was a feeling in the industry that Konami had began to lose its touch.

In truth Konami was simply readying its software for the 16-bit launches, with *Super Castlevania IV* being completed as far back as 1990, a good year before its eventual release. Indeed, for the 16-bit era Konami would become one of the most prolific publishers of titles on all systems. In 1993, Konami said goodbye to its exclusive deal with Nintendo and began developing for the Mega Drive, its first title on Sega's machine being *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: The Hyperstone Heist*. Konami's licensed games would appear on dual formats usually debuting on the



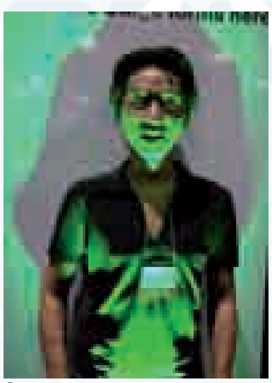
A typical Konami flyer from the Eighties.



Despite setting the standard for music games in Japanese arcades, Konami has now fallen greatly behind the massive success of *Rock Band* and *Guitar Hero*.



The Wii version of *Pro Evolution 2008* proved to be a refreshing take on the franchise. Check it out.



Akira Yamaoka: Meet the musical genius behind the *Silent Hill* games.



Konami's office as it looks today. *Frogger* mascot just out of shot…

SNES, while original titles like *Rocket Knight Adventures* would be assessed after an initial sales run, only then would the conversions (if any) follow.

In the arcade, Konami was losing ground to Capcom, with the CPS-1 and 2 boards destroying everything in their wake. Konami's *Asterix* had a good following in Europe, but Stateside the little Gaul was practically unheard of, losing out to the likes of *Alien Vs. Predator.* The humiliation didn't end there. While *Mortal Kombat* and *Street Fighter II* were attracting gamers back to the arcades, Konami's *Martial Champions* was attracting nothing but derision. Konami hit back with *X-Men*, a 2D realisation of the comic books, it wasn't enough and Konami was brushed aside in the arcades by Sega, Namco, Capcom and SNK, with only the *C.O.W Boys Of Moo Mesa* holding the charm of vintage Konami. For the next few years Konami worked on 3D technology and didn't hit its stride in the arcades again until late 1996 with the release of *Winding Heat* and the seminal *GTI Club*.

While the arcade divisions researched new technology and slowed its release schedule, Konami's home divisions went into overdrive, in what would become one of the company's most creative periods. *Snatcher* found a home on the Mega-CD, *Axelay* become one of the most impressive shooters to grace the SNES, while the likes of *Sparkster*, *Castlevania*, *Animaniacs*, *Tiny Toons* and *Contra* all proved to be solid releases. Konami also returned to movie licensing with *Batman Returns*, making an adventure/RPG version for the PC. To balance the reduced publishing income Konami received from EA and Rare as they were now both third and first-party developers for Nintendo, Konami published some smaller games in Europe, with Braben's brilliant (but buggy) *Frontier* being the standout title from this time.

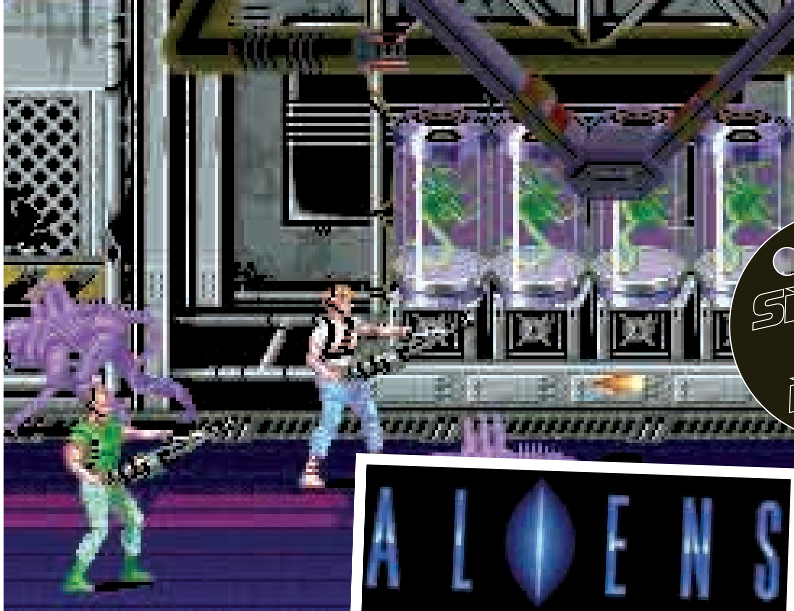
With the release of the Saturn, PlayStation development again shifted up a gear. Licensing the PlayStation architecture for its arcade operation Konami had found the development platform it had been looking for, and while its teams developed ever more powerful arcade experiences, the home divisions worked tirelessly to develop more interesting games.

It was at this point that Konami's commitment to Sony started to become evident. Courted by Sega, Sony and Nintendo for the new generation, Konami virtually shunned Nintendo. In exchange for development tools for the then-labelled Ultra 64, Nintendo demanded exclusivity of any games developed with them. Nakama baulked at this, telling Nintendo's US president, Howard Lincoln that: "Konami would take the chance that Nintendo would need them more than we need Nintendo." It was a risky manoeuvre borne from the frustrations felt years before by many when Nintendo petulantly delayed the release of the SNES despite myriad cries from developers. The risky manoeuvre would eventually pay great dividends when Nintendo next came knocking.

Interestingly, Konami has been credited with the name change for the N64, holding the copyright to the name Ultra, Nakama refused to sell the name to Nintendo, hoping instead to launch games for the N64 under the Ultra moniker ('*Ultra Castlevania*', '*Ultra Soccer*' and so on), creating the impression of first-party titles. Sadly for Nakama and Konami, Nintendo didn't play ball and simply renamed the console as the Nintendo 64.

During the shelf life of the Saturn and the PlayStation, Konami would produce 25 games for Sega's machine, and a staggering 119 for the PlayStation. Included in this roster were the games that would cement and become the bedrock of the franchises that would take the company into the new century, creating a minor revolution on the way.

Kojima's *Snatcher* would come to both machines (although he wouldn't play a part in these versions) and were updated from the PC-E version with additional graphics and sounds. Konami removed the nudity from the original as a response to being named in US Senators Joseph Lieberman and Herbert Kohl's witch-hunt of the early Nineties, where Konami were held







Silent Hill 2's Pyramid Head is one of the scariest creations you're ever likely to face in a videogame.

up as lead protagonists in youth violence across the US following the release of *Lethal Enforcers*. Both the Senators were pictured holding Konami's Justifier lightguns at the time, something Nakama took very personally.

This was followed by the hearings themselves, where the senators attempted to explain the game's use of human characters – portrayed realistically through digitised graphics – bloodshed and guns was the message Konami wanted children to have, asking what sort of example the game and gun gave to children and questioning the kind of person that would indeed give a gun to children. In the highlight moment of the Senate's hearings, a somewhat confused Senator Lieberman questioned the racial sensitivity of a Konami advertisement stating that *Lethal Enforcers*' players would fight off invading ninjas in Chinatown, claiming that as ninjas were ethnically Japanese, not Chinese, Konami might be offending someone – flamboyantly though Lieberman couldn't say who or what Konami may be offending. Konami was overshadowed at the hearings by Sega and the infamy surrounding *Night Trap*, but Nakama wasn't about to take a chance the second time.

Other Konami classics also received the 32-bit treatment, *Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night*, an epic telling of the Belmont's tale featuring one of the greatest gaming soundtracks of all time was released for the PlayStation and Saturn. Sadly, politics within Konami's Chicago headquarters almost prevented the US from getting the game at all (the Saturn version remains exclusive to Japan), and the delay certainly took the game's momentum away, the best in the series showed only marginal sales compared to other versions, and the title was barely noticed on the game charts.

Metal Gear Solid on the other hand fared considerably better. Hideo Kojima returned to the series and effectively remade the original game in full 3D. The new hardware offered the freedom to explore the franchise, and although reminiscent of Capcom's *Resident Evil* visual style it was Kojima's grasp of narrative that would help take gaming to a new era. *Metal Gear* would go some way to blurring the lines between games and movies and was a totally interactive experience; gamers would lap the game up the world over. Kojima's idea of remaking the original for a global market was proved to be the right one, nascent gamers in the West had largely missed the original games. For Konami and the PlayStation audience, it was like having a whole new franchise.

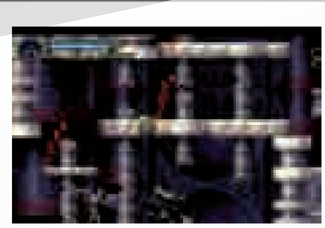
Fundamental to these successes for Konami was the understanding that it took time to realise new technologies, so early releases on new hardware were usually games that rarely push a machine.

SIX OF THE BEST



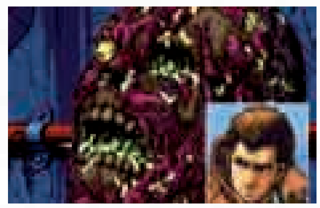
Silent Hill 2 PS2/Xbox/PC 2001

The follow on to *Silent Hill* wasn't a direct sequel. Starting with one of the greatest intros to any game, a long walk in the fog leads the player into a world riddled with guilt and horror. Multiple endings add to the longevity and are directly attributed to the player's actions throughout the game. A masterpiece in suspense and storytelling, seldom has a game been so debated at academic levels.



Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night 1997 PlayStation/Saturn/Xbox Live Arcade

This follow-up to *Chi No Rondo* is situated in a giant castle. Richter, the star of the last game, has been possessed by the dark priest Shaft, who he thought he'd slain, and now controls the castle. RPG elements are introduced, items have specific not obvious uses, and character levelling is vital. Visually and aurally stunning, this is Konami at its best.



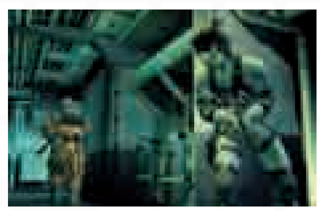
Snatcher 1992 PC-E/PlayStation/Saturn

Reminiscent of *Blade Runner*, *Snatcher* fuses a world around human paranoia. Bioroids or Snatchers are machines that are killing people and taking their place in society. Feeling like a videogame version of *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers*, the graphical interface allows for first-person adventuring enhancing the interactivity of the game. A must play.



Axelay 1993 SNES/Virtual Console

When Hideo Ueda and Kazuhiko Ishida told their bosses they wanted to make *Axelay*, their bosses were sceptical. *Parodius* was out and doing good business, but with their pedigree they were given the green light. *Axelay* made great use of parallax scrolling and SNES's Mode 7 capabilities. Made all the more exceptional because of the challenge and bosses.



MGS2: Sons Of Liberty PS2/Xbox/PC

Set two years after the events of the first game, *MGS2* is set on an offshore clean-up facility that's been taken over by terrorists. The series finally came of age here, offering gamers the ability to shoot radios to stop enemies calling for back-up and other innovative solutions to avoid being captured. *Metal Gear Solid 2* went on to sell 8 million copies worldwide.



International Superstar Soccer '98 N64/PS

Konami's premier sports title finally gained recognition in the US. Although the series had been around for a while in different guises, it was this iteration that introduced the through ball. Better than any football game before it, the inclusion of classic games bolstered what was already a tight package and was a fitting last hurrah before *Pro Evo* took the franchise.

For the first time in its existence Konami had stopped rushing. Deadlines came and went, some games launched, some games slipped, any additional development costs would be met by additional sales from selling quality products was the belief. This was all well and good for the market in Japan, but the US and Europe were struggling to find titles. 1996 looked to be an incredibly barren year for Western gamers on the Konami front. The US arm turned down many titles saying they were unsuitable for the US market (including *Castlevania: SOTN*). With little to release, Konami Chicago set about sourcing titles out, Appaloosa Interactive was tasked with creating a new 3D *Contra* game. The contract between the two companies was weighed heavily in favour of Konami, and

DEVELOPER LOOKBACK





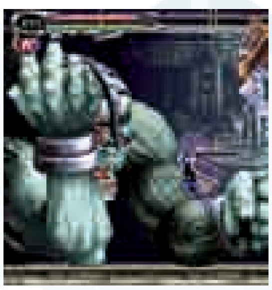




M.I.A.: *Missing In Action* is apparently the sequel to *Green Beret*. Both titles do look very similar and share the same play mechanics, although we prefer the original.



Solid Snake; quite possibly Konami's most iconic character.



Castlevania: Dawn Of Sorrow on the DS. It's good, but no *Symphony Of The Night*.

many penalty clauses were included to ensure the game was of a standard that Konami was happy to carry the *Contra* badge and that it was released around the other titles in Konami's calendar, reminiscent in many ways of the contract Konami signed with Nintendo when it developed and published *Mario Roulette* some years earlier. Eventually this would evolve into the Konami business model.

Konami would eventually return to Nintendo as the Saturn started to die, a small showing on the N64 of only 14 games would include classics such as *ISS '98* and *Castlevania 64*, fitting that a Nintendo console witnessed the franchise's debut in 3D. *Holy Magic Century* and *Rakuda Kids* came and went, sales didn't reflect their quality, but it wouldn't be until the GameCube that Konami and Nintendo would find their love for each other again.

Toward the end of the Nineties Konami revitalised itself in the arcades with titles like *Silent Scope* and *Dance Dance Revolution*; the latter at the time of writing is in its 11th arcade iteration, and featured rather prominently in Madonna's *Hung Up* video. Konami also had great success with its *Guitar Freaks* franchise. Debuting in 1999 and receiving sequels annually, these games were the precursor for *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band*. The series branches to include *DrumMania* and *KeyboardMania*, all of which can be linked together to create a full band experience. Being late to market with the home versions of these games is to date one of Konami's greatest mistakes. Although this is offset somewhat by the massive success that the *DDR* franchise has had on home consoles. All the more interesting perhaps because Konami didn't show a lot of innovation through the Nineties, preferring the re-imagining of existing franchises, and to let others lead and then better their endeavours, as with *Silent Hill*.

Silent Hill was a response to Capcom's *Resident Evil*. Until that point the dev teams had preferred *Crypt Killer* and the vivid dystopias and characters from *Vandal Hearts* to deliver evil. Keiichiro Toyama's classic created a place of evil, a town that had been home to horror and devolved itself into an edifice of darkness. Each sequel would take place in the same town, with new characters fated into the world of *Silent Hill*. With a ten-year legacy, comics, novels, CDs, plays and an arcade game, *Silent Hill* is set to become one of Konami's most enduring series. But the revenue generated here pales when compared to Konami's biggest franchise developed in the 32-bit period, *Yu-Gi-Oh!*.

Yu-Gi-Oh! made its mediocre videogame debut in Japan in 2000 on the Game Boy, but it debuted globally in 2002 on the GBA and PlayStation – two consoles that were showing their age at the time, but were home to an established target audience. Based on a cartoon that was itself based on a manga, *Yu-Gi-Oh!* is a trading game, an Eastern variant of *Might the Gathering*. The initial games came with limited edition game cards; such was the clamour for these cards that in Japan both the PlayStation and GBA saw a slight sales spike on release of the titles, while some people purchased the games just for the cards. It wasn't just the games that make this such a lucrative franchise for Konami. In 1999, Konami became the sole producer and distributor of Yu-Gi-Oh! trading cards the world over, a decade later and the game just keeps evolving and is regularly compared to Warhammer for comparable excellence. To date, over 2.5 billion cards have been sold in Europe alone with no signs of slowing, coupled with the games and toys, Yu-Gi-Oh! stands firmly as Konami's greatest franchise and positions Konami uniquely in the industry. Unique in as much as it is the only primary videogame developer in the world that could survive

KONAMI TIMELINE 1990-2008

1990 KONAMI BEGINS MAKING GAMES FOR THE PC-ENGINE TO MAKE UP FOR LOST REVENUE FROM THE ARCADES AND HOME CONSOLES DUE TO A SLUMP IN 8-BIT MACHINES. PARODIUS DEBUTS IN THE ARCADES.

1991 KONAMI LAUNCHES ITS FIRST SIMPSONS GAME, ACCLAIM TAKES THE LICENCE FOR HOME CONSOLES, SO KONAMI IS CONFINED TO THE ARCADES AND 8-BIT MICROS. TMNT RECEIVES A STELLAR FOLLOW-UP BASED LOOSELY ON THE MOVIE.

1992 KONAMI STARTS PUBLISHING FOR THE MEGA DRIVE, DEBUTING WITH A TURTLES GAME.

1993 KONAMI BEGINS TO EXPLORE CD TECHNOLOGY ON THE PC-E AND SEGA-CD. KONAMI HAS ITS MOST BOUNTIFUL YEAR ON THE SNES. AND ACQUIRES THE LICENCE TO BATMAN AND ROBIN.

1994 KONAMI STARTS TO PRODUCE ITS FIRST PLAYSTATION GAMES AND LICENSED THE HARDWARE FOR THE ARCADES.

1995 KONAMI'S HEADQUARTERS RECEIVE SOME DAMAGE DUE TO THE KOBE EARTHQUAKE.

1996 SPEED KING, A WIPEOUT CLONE, DEBUTS IN JAPAN ARCADES. EACH ARCADE REQUIRES AN OPERATOR TO SUPERVISE GAMERS TO PREVENT INJURY AND ILLNESS. GAMERS COMPLAIN OF NAUSEA AND PRODUCTION IS DISCONTINUED, A PSX PORT IS MADE TO ENSURE THE INVESTMENT IS NOT LOST.

1997 KONAMI ALLOWS THIRD PARTY DEVELOPERS ACCESS TO KEY FRANCHISES FOR THE FIRST TIME.

1998 KONAMI ENTERS THE TRADING CARD BUSINESS AFTER SUCCESSFULLY ACQUIRING THE LICENCE TO YU-GI-OH!. THE FIRST CASTLEVANIA GAME IN 3D DEBUTS ON THE N64.

SIX TO MISS



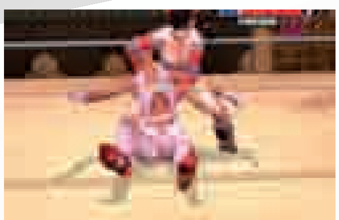
Martial Champions 1993 Arcade/PC-E CD

With Capcom and SNK jostling for the number one arcade fighter, Konami returned with its first beat-'em-up since *Yie Ar Kung Fu*. With better hardware than the CPS-2, *Martial Champions* was stunning, but had very little depth. The characters were all clones of *SF* and *KOF* characters, and the backgrounds looked vaguely familiar.



Castlevania Legends 1997 Game Boy

All great franchises drop the ball sometimes, but this was truly bad. Lacklustre visuals do little to convey the atmosphere of *Castlevania*; the sound can be forgiven due to the hardware, but it's the disregard for the series' lineage that is unforgivable. Set after *SOTN* but purporting to be the first game, it's a real shame and best forgotten.



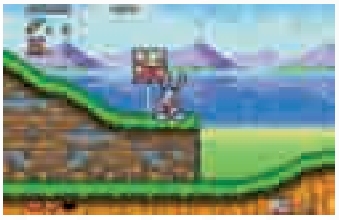
Rumble Roses 2004 PS2/Xbox

Wrestling is big in Japan, sexy women are big everywhere. Envious of Tecmo's *Dead Or Alive*, Konami created *Rumble Roses*. Tight camera angles and strong athletics do little to hide the loose gameplay, more a button masher than a tactical wrestler, it holds little challenge. The mud-wrestling sections put this on par with *BMX XXX*, avoid.



The Simpsons Bowling 2000 Arcade

Konami has had much success with *The Simpsons*, not this time though. Controlled with a trackball, the roster of characters are the usual *Simpsons* fare, but each character's stats are grossly unfair, with Homer and Willy having almost perfect aim. Shoot three strikes and you get a new special ball, that makes missing impossible.



Tiny Toon Adventures: Buster's Hidden Treasure 1993 Mega Drive

Tiny Toons were big business in the early Nineties, appealing to kids and adults who'd been weaned on Warner Bros. Visually the Mega Drive had seldom looked crisper and the cast were all here. Unfortunately, many gamers played through it on the first time of asking. Yup, it really was that easy.



Yume Penguin Monogatari 1991 NES

The player takes on the role of Penta the penguin, who's been dumped by his girlfriend for being overweight. The new beau's henchmen attack Penta with food to maintain his weight, while you try desperately to lose weight and get fit by drinking diet drinks. Avoid unless you forever want to look in the mirror and grow paranoid.

"TO BE A SUCCESS IN THE NINETIES WOULD BE ALL ABOUT SOFTWARE AND INNOVATION. SOMETHING KONAMI WOULD HAVE IN SPADES"

without making games; Konami's reach is long.

In 2000, after donating Konami's old facilities to Japan, The Kozuki Foundation for Higher Education established the Kozuki Foundation for Advanced Information Technology (approved by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology) to which Kagemasa Kozuki was inaugurated as executive director. Konami actively pursues social wellness, indeed it describes the choice of logo colour as: "Konami Red, which is easy to familiarise with and expresses quality and class. It demonstrates the corporate attitude of New Konami Group, one that offers inspiration and reassurance, life with joy and pleasure. We are focused on creating a shift from the consumption of time to the value of time, changing all aspects of time into a bright and inspiring experience." Uttered by anyone else in the world of gaming these might sound like hollow sound bites, but Konami remember came to games as the jukebox industry started to fade. The company has fitness centres across Japan that in 2005 received authorisation by the Japanese Olympic Committee to become Japan's first 'JOC Athlete Support Centre'. Beijing may very well be host to the first gold medallist trained from the profits of videogames.

One of Konami's subsidiaries Combi Wellness Corporation is a Japanese Health Care Specialist pursuant in prolonging and improving the quality of people's lives up to and beyond retirement, making everything from medicines to exercise bikes and health foods, not only does it tie up with Konami's other endeavours it will eventually lead Konami into new arenas.

For the games, Konami has the biggest amusement arm in the industry, developing hardware and software for arcades; it makes LCD screens for pachinko slot machines; its arcade operators and gamers are supported by Konami's e-Amusement service; and casinos are serviced from Konami's casino facilities in Nevada.

Konami's back catalogue is now appearing at pace on its mobile download service, and it is delivering a new *Castlevania* in 2008 tailored to the mobile market. With *MGS*, *Track & Field* and *Silent Hill* already supported there is no doubt about how seriously Konami takes this market. Then there are the graphic novels, and the interactive novels based on key franchises. Alongside a stellar release for *MGS4* and redefining *Pro Evolution Soccer* on the Wii, the future for Konami is bright and absolutely unimaginable, just as its past was.



Guitar Freaks has been around forever, but it's *Rock Band* that now gets the kudos.

1999 KONAMI IS FINALLY LISTED ON THE LONDON STOCK EXCHANGE AS TWO OF ITS BIGGEST FRANCHISES ARE BORN, SILENT HILL AND THE FIRST YU-GI-OH! GAME.

2000 KONAMI SETS UP THE NEVADA AMUSEMENT DIVISION TO CREATE GAMING MACHINES FOR CASINOS. IT ALSO CREATED A NEW FINANCIAL PRODUCT CALLED A GAME FUND.

2001 KONAMI ENTERS THE TOY CANDY BUSINESS AND MAKES HUDSON SOFT AN AFFILIATE.

2002 KONAMI PUBLISHES ITS FIRST XBOX GAMES. IT ALSO DEVELOPS ITS E-AMUSEMENT SYSTEM THAT ALLOWS ARCADE GAMERS TO PLAY ONLINE AGAINST OTHER ARCADE PLAYERS AND OTHER ARCADES.

2003 KONAMI CELEBRATES ITS 30TH ANNIVERSARY WITH A NEW LOGO AND ANNIVERSARY PACKS.

2004 KONAMI DEVELOPS ITS FIRST SPORTS EQUIPMENT AND DISTRIBUTES IT ACROSS JAPAN INTO ALL OF ITS SPORTS CLUBS.

2005 KONAMI INCREASES ITS HOLDING IN HUDSON SOFT.

2006 INTERNET REVOLUTION, INC WAS ESTABLISHED AS A JOINT VENTURE COMPANY WITH INTERNET INITIATIVE JAPAN, INC, THEIR AIMS ARE TO DEVELOP A TANGIBLE DOWNLOAD SERVICE AND TO INNOVATE ONLINE FEATURES IN GAMES.

2007 KONAMI BRINGS PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER TO THE Wii, DESPITE LOSING GROUND TO FIFA EVERYWHERE ELSE, ON THE Wii, KONAMI HAS TAKEN FOOTBALL TO THE NEXT LEVEL.

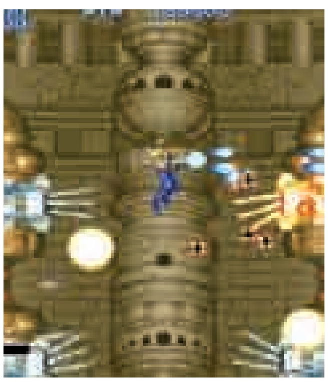
2008 KONAMI SUCCESSFULLY LAUNCHES MGS4, THE BIGGEST PS3 LAUNCH TO DATE.

WHY YOU MUST PLAY...

FORGOTTEN WORLDS



FORGOTTEN WORLDS HAS BEEN PORTED TO PRETTY MUCH EVERY EARLY SYSTEM GOING, AND FOR GOOD REASON – IT'S AWESOME. IF YOU'VE NOT PLAYED IT, THEN WE'RE GOING TO ASSUME THAT YOU'VE BEEN IN A COMA



» Modern videogame heroes have it easy – bouncing around, jumping over this, throwing that – AND they're given names!

F*orgotten Worlds* is draped in ambiguity. Seriously, we don't get names for our heroes, other than 'unknown soldiers'; hell, we don't even get a solid plot per se – as far as we can work out, it has something to do with flying male models, dressed like game-show contestants, fighting in Egypt (circa 3008).

Throughout the game, our ears are continually pricked by the type of dialogue usually spat from the mouths of people with no real understanding of how to communicate. Such examples include this peculiar opening gambit: "Did you find the guy?", immediately followed by, "I'll finish you today for sure." And our personal favourite – "I'll burn him with my aura".

But regardless, as we said, the game is awesome and well deserving of your time. Playing the role of two flying mercenaries, it's your job to battle through some intense side-scrolling shmup action. The game can best be described as a punctured *Space Harrier*, and our two protagonists certainly adhere to this thinking. Both hover about the air, accompanied by a trusty satellite dish/shield *R-Type*-type thingy, firing cannons at a variety of imaginative targets – some of which even include those familiar-looking *Space Harrier* dragons built from spheres, although in *FW* they're circles.

It's often cited that *Forgotten Worlds* is the third game of an unofficial Capcom '*Jetpac* trilogy' made up of *Section Z* and the rather brilliant *Side Arms*, and although their narratives don't follow on from each other, when you play them it's easy to see how a connection could be made – keep an eye out for the Capcom Cow!



» Why ever did being 20 foot tall, wearing loincloths, having a Schwarzenegger-style body and a head consisting of balls of fire go out of fashion?!

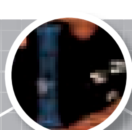
TIMELINE



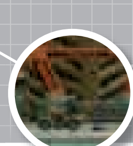
ROBOTRON: 2084
Version Featured: Arcade
Year Released: 1982



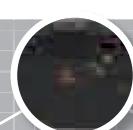
SECTION Z
Version Featured: Arcade
Year Released: 1985



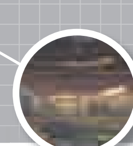
SIDE ARMS HYPER DYNE
Version Featured: Arcade
Year Released: 1986



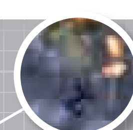
MIDNIGHT RESISTANCE
Version Featured: Arcade
Year Released: 1989



SMASH TV
Version Featured: Arcade
Year Released: 1990



ECO FIGHTERS
Version Featured: Arcade
Year Released: 1994



ASSAULT HEROES 2
Version Featured: 360 (Xbox Live Arcade)
Year Released: 2008

THE CONVERSIONS



1. MEGA DRIVE
The most notable thing about this port is the redrawn visuals and the lovely silky smooth gameplay – even with two players and tons going on, there's little slowdown. With the Mega Drive port, you begin the game with the satellite, alter its speed and wuss out with an excellent autofire mode.

2. CPC
The CPC port really looks colourful, although it does lack any environment detailing – but check out the intricacy on the shops! (Nice try – Ed.) Sadly, the gameplay feels a tad staccato and your gun fires one bullet every two seconds, making it a bit of a struggle to get on with.

3. SPECCY
Not a bad port at all, it has a lot more similarities with the arcade than meets the eye. Ignoring the lack of colour, the sprites are brilliantly drawn, the game itself feels fluid enough and the game follows the layout of the arcade game pretty well. Also, the game is charitable with the Zennies, with price cuts in the shop!

4. C64
The best port among the micros in terms of faithfulness to the look, here we're getting the usual blocky sprites and some fine and impressively staunch detail in the backgrounds. The gun fires more rapidly, the action moves fluidly and we're even blessed with the arcade cut-scenes.

5. AMIGA
Static screenshots show a promising arcade conversion that makes use of the Amiga's extra muscle. The reality is cumbersome controls, cumbersome gameplay and some shocking loading times. A wasted effort that somehow managed to receive a 97% in *Zzap!*

6. MASTER SYSTEM
With the livery of the CPC version and the smoothness of the C64 port, this is probably the best 8-bit version you can come by. Lovely looking, and boasting both its bigger bros' shield and autofiring options, the Sega Master System can boast another solid arcade conversion.

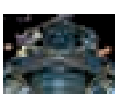
Where the real tender meat in *Forgotten Worlds* can be sampled is fourfold. First of all, it boasts chunky and bold graphics, largely thanks to it running from Capcom's Play System arcade board – the first game to do so – its 360-degree controls that allowed you to pump bullets all around you, its pace, seeing waves of enemies on the screen teleporting, shifting and firing, especially towards the end stages, and no slowdown. And finally, there's the huge amount of imaginative enemies and gargantuan bosses that make you want to keep pushing pennies into it just out of sheer intrigue.

The game, however, boasts a pretty tough time for everyone involved. And ironically, its 360 controls can actually make things a little more frenzied than they need to be. It's often best to play the game like a conventional blaster a lot of the time, keeping your gun poised forward and ignoring those enemies that drop behind you. It's advised to keep the circular spraying reserved for bosses and those rare moments your eyes feel truly capable of pairing off, yet still working in unison.

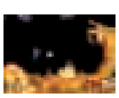
Forgotten Worlds' popularity would see it appear on a glut of home platforms (such as the six in the Conversions box above), with the most iconic being the reprogrammed Mega Drive port, which might not have managed to fully capture the glossy, tactile look of the arcade version, but like the Mega Drive's *Ghouls 'N Ghosts* – incidentally, yet another reprogrammed Capcom arcade conversion – *Forgotten Worlds* would certainly come to do Sega Mega Drive owners proud.

Deftly, Sega would ensure that the all-important co-op function was wholesaled over and the brilliance, as a result of the compulsive co-op pull that the game had, would be faithfully replicated. This is one game that won't be forgotten by those who have ever played it.

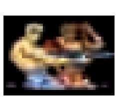
THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR



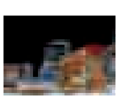
BOSSES
Forgotten Worlds has some truly jaw-dropping end-of-level bosses. The most impressive being this chap: a giant blue demigod dressed like a samurai.



SOUNDTRACK
Listen out for *Forgotten Worlds*' organic-feeling soundtrack; it seems to seamlessly change to suit the action on screen (well, we think so anyway).



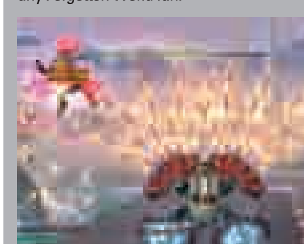
IFFY CUT-SCENES
There's a ton of between-stage, giant boorish-looking close-up single-shot cut scenes with stupid text at the bottom. Above is one example.



SHOPS
Keep an eye out for these handy newsstands. Inside, you can exchange Zennies to upgrade weapons, armour and buy a newspaper with a boss hint in it.

TRY THIS NEXT

OMEGA 5
It's clear that *Forgotten Worlds* was a huge influence on Hudson's sublime Xbox Live shooter, *Omega 5*. At a mere 800 points (about £6), you're getting one of the best blasters on the machine. This time out, though, there are double the amount of characters, plenty of unlockables – including a one-hit-kill mode – and loads of dazzling fire power and varied enemies. Sadly, with only four levels to work through, the game is for score-chasers only, so it will draw you back. Stunning looking, *Omega 5* is a must-download for any *Forgotten World* fan.



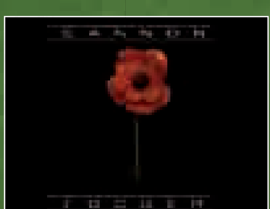
THE MAKING OF... CANNON FODDER





Jon Hare, designer of seminal Amiga action-strategy game Cannon Fodder, explains to Craig Grannell why war has never been so much fun, along with providing an insight into the as-yet-unreleased third game in the series

IN THE KNOW

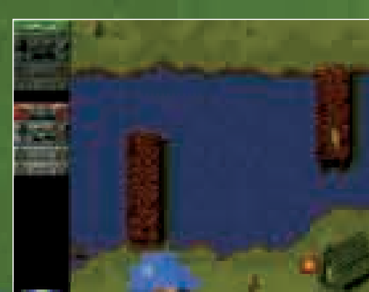


- » **PUBLISHER:** VIRGIN
- » **DEVELOPER:** SENSIBLE SOFTWARE
- » **RELEASED:** 1993
- » **PLATFORMS:** AMIGA. CONVERTED TO 3DO, ARCHIMEDES, AMIGA CD32, ATARI ST, GAME BOY COLOR, JAGUAR, MEGA DRIVE, MOBILE, PC, SNES
- » **GENRE:** ARCADE, REAL-TIME TACTICS AND STRATEGY
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £1+

Some games rightfully stake their place in history, referred to time and time again as the inspiration behind modern titles. *Cannon Fodder* is not one of them. Despite being one of the earliest titles of its kind, historians are more likely to cite the likes of *Command & Conquer* as leading the real-time tactics and strategy brigade. And yet *Cannon Fodder* arrived two years earlier, combining the unit management of *Lemmings* with the 'considered' bloodshed of *Ikari Warriors* (as opposed to the frenetic *Commando*), tightly wrapping everything up in a layer of deeply black humour. But although *Cannon Fodder*'s story eventually became one of frustration for designer Jon Hare, there's no doubt that the game's development was a different matter.

For the uninitiated, *Cannon Fodder* arrived to rave reviews in 1993, and offered a thoroughly modern style of gameplay. Entirely mouse-controlled, you take a small squad of soldiers on various missions, exploring varied landscapes, blowing things up, rescuing hostages, and driving highly erratic vehicles. The squad can be split into teams, to provide cover for soldiers undertaking more hazardous manoeuvres, and Sensible Software's typically liberal dollops of black humour ensured *Cannon Fodder* further stood out from the crowd.

The game's origins are largely forgotten to Jon today, but he thinks the seeds might have been sown in pre-Sensi days: "Chris [Yates, Sensi's co-founder] and I designed a war game on the back of a wallpaper table. Lots of grids, with various troops and stuff, and some elaborate rules." However, the gestation of the game also stemmed from two other sources during Sensi's early Amiga days. *Mega Lo Mania*, released in 1991, touched on war, if not action, and the team wanted to push the war angle in a new game. Also, experiments with sprite trails proved interesting. "That was the first thing we did for *Cannon Fodder*," says Jon.





» [Amiga] Jon on Boot Hill: "The score focuses you on what's going on, and each soldier has a name, which gives them an identity, since people psychologically latch on to names."



"I HADN'T SEEN A GAME UP UNTIL THAT POINT THAT FOCUSED SO MUCH ON THE PEOPLE THAT ACTUALLY DIED, AND THE IDEA THAT IN WAR PEOPLE REALLY DO DIE"

"There was this trail of sprites, which turned into soldiers, and then we got bullets coming from multiple people."

Jon's keen to downplay certain aspects of his creation. For example, he doesn't consider *Cannon Fodder* particularly innovative – "It's not that different from all the old *Rambo*-style games, and it's a fairly obvious and basic combat game" – although he remains proud of the troop idea. He also dismisses praise regarding the mouse-based control method (click to move to a point, right-click to fire, left and right-click to fire a 'special' weapon), noting that "we were used to using configurations of buttons to do things in our games, and this was an extension of that, really. It's all pretty obvious."

What Jon's keener to talk about is design, the area in which he feels *Cannon Fodder* is most successful. "Level-design-wise, it's the best game we ever did," he says. "From a design point of view, it's quite calculated. I remember drawing the maps with coloured pencils in a Chelmsford library, and we worked out all of the features of the game at the start – traps, spikes, tanks and things you could climb into. I made a conscious effort to ensure that in every level of *Cannon Fodder* you saw something new." For Jon, this was a key aspect of the game – there's always a reason to push forward, because every level provides something you've never seen. This might be a new piece of background, a new weapon, or a new experience, but there's always something different. "That was important to me, to reward the player for getting past each stage," says Jon. "By adding new features and then mixing up the size of maps, length of missions, number of men, and terrain types, you get variety, but also a sense of progress."

The viewpoint, borrowed from *Sensible Soccer* and *Mega Lo Mania*, combined with tight level design provides a tactical component to *Cannon Fodder*, adding depth over the run-of-the-mill run-'n'-gun games like *Commando* that peppered 8-bit platforms. Running around gunning down enemies doesn't get you far – instead, you can and must look ahead, decide what to do, determine whether to split the troops, and use all available resources to your advantage. But with so many elements added to the mix, was the game difficult to get right? "*Cannon Fodder* is just another example of a game with a universe that has a bunch of laws attached to it in terms of how everything works. As long as you get those laws solid and take your time, everything sorts itself out," claims Jon.

We ask whether Sensi's usual 'complete every level once and move on' testing method was employed, which he confirms, noting that with *Cannon Fodder*, the team ensured the game mechanics were nailed down and that each level could at least be completed with fairly junior guys. And we then mention mission eight, where the difficulty curve suddenly became a wall. "It's the most ridiculous use of *Cannon Fodder*'s game mechanics, and it's

POP STARS

Cannon Fodder's soundtrack included an insanely catchy white reggae number with lashings of black humour in its lyrical content. Along with the song's title, *War! Never Been So Much Fun*, was the couplet "Go up to your brother, kill him with your gun/Leave him lying in his uniform, dying in the sun."

This mix of jaunty reggae and sombre lyrics hammered home the game's satirical edge. "I've been writing music since I was 16, and Chris and I were in loads of bands," explains Jon, who wrote the initial version of the *Cannon Fodder* song, which comprised a bassline, two guitar chords and some vocals.

Regular Sensible collaborator Richard Joseph then knocked it into shape. "He got all the parts down, and we added bits of horns and percussion and elements of arrangements," says Jon. "Rich then very cleverly broke it up into samples, and made it work within the technical limitations of the Amiga."

» [Amiga] Environments were always different, with Jon aiming to introduce something new for the player to each level.



» [Amiga] Jops and RJ were annoyed that they only had grenades to hand and not some thick woolly socks.



THE MAKING OF… CANNON FODDER



» [Amiga] Freebie *Cannon Soccer*, given away with one of *Amiga Format*'s Christmas issues, finds you battling legions of enraged soccer players.



» [SNES] Jon on the console versions: "*Cannon Fodder* holds up fairly well on them – not as well as with a mouse, because it was designed for one, but it wasn't a disaster without one."



about not panicking in a crisis," says Jon, adding, with more than a hint of wryness, that it's his favourite level.

Elsewhere, Jon's approach was surprisingly hands-off. With previous titles, he'd been responsible for most game visuals, but Stoo Cambridge took those particular reins for *Cannon Fodder*. "The graphics were based on the style of *Sensible Soccer* and *Mega Lo Mania*, but Stoo added his own style to it," recalls Jon. "He was very much into cartoony stuff, and so some of his humour came through, which is good."

Humour was apparent in most Sensi titles, and Jon considers that the company's approach was to be not too serious about what it was doing, but to keep things clean. "This approach was similar to Nintendo's – the games were fairly humorous, but we were always thorough about making everything polished. Our treatment of *Cannon Fodder* was about as light-hearted as you can get for a war game, while covering a serious issue. I guess it was just our style."

When *Cannon Fodder* was released, Amiga owners bought it in droves. It leapt to the top spot in the all-format charts, and reviewers couldn't heap enough praise on the game, typically awarding scores higher than 90%. Not everyone was as impressed, though: the game's humour and poppy usage hit a nerve. The British Legion was up in arms, and the *Daily Star* started a campaign to sink the game, quoting such gaming luminaries as, erm, Sir Menzies Campbell MP, who waffled: "It is monstrous that the poppy should be used in such a way."

Jon is unrepentant about the criticism that was levelled at the game by such quarters: "What irritated me is that they'd obviously not played it." When we suggest perhaps Sensi was courting controversy, Jon disagrees: "I think we did the opposite. I'd not seen a game up until that point that focused so much on the people that actually died, and the idea that in war people really do die. We named everyone and showed all their graves on the Boot Hill screen. That effect really works for anyone who's played it for any length of time."

He also reveals that for all of its bluster, the British Legion was most concerned with rights issues: "Basically, they were annoyed that we had used their poppy. In the end, they said 'if you give us 500 quid, we'll keep quiet', and so we paid them off." Jon notes that he's never bought a poppy since: "I bought all of my poppies in 1993, and I actually thought f*** them – they come on all moralistic, and you can pay them

"PEOPLE TALKED ABOUT COMPUTER GAMES BEING THE NEXT ROCK 'N' ROLL AT ONE POINT IN THE PAST, AND OUR APPROACH WITH CANNON FODDER WAS AS NEAR AS ANYONE REALLY GOT TO THAT"

» [Amiga] Bomber valiantly fights on alone, taking out the evil blue guys, but admiring their most excellent snowman.



» The Sensible Software development team in all their military get-up.







» [Amiga] The names of the fallen are displayed after each mission – perhaps the first videogame to do so. And yet hatemongers still claimed the game was insensitive to war.



» [DOS] Later levels enable you to hurtle about the place in various vehicles, which are borderline uncontrollable.

off with 500 quid… There's a big lesson there about how companies work…"

Although the reaction of politicians and the non-gaming press left a bad taste, *Cannon Fodder* persevered – for a time at least. Conversions for 16-bit consoles in 1994 remained somewhat faithful to the Amiga original, as did the Game Boy Color release in 2000. A sequel also appeared for the Amiga in 1994, with **Retro Gamer**'s Stuart Campbell on level design. "*Cannon Fodder 2* was our first attempt at delegating design elements. Stuart worked with the artist, and the game used the original *Cannon Fodder* engine," says Jon. "To be honest, it wasn't managed as tightly as I'd have liked, in terms of art and level flow, but I think Sensi went through a period of being greedy, trying to capitalise on its success, in terms of how many products were being simultaneously produced. *Cannon Fodder 2* suffered a little because of that."

Sadly, the third game in the series has yet to materialise, despite several false starts, and despite Jon working on *Cannon Fodder 3* being part of the deal he struck with Codemasters when the publisher bought Sensible Software in 1999. "This is a source of great frustration for me, because *Cannon Fodder 3* had a full design – and it's a great design," says Jon, who's only too happy to share what might have been.

The basis of *Cannon Fodder 3* retained the idea of a troop fulfilling objectives in varied environments, but the scope was bigger. "The individual soldiers were brought out more – they were different and there were experts in different fields," says Jon, adding that characters grew with their skills. "And the plot was great – all about being a world peace force, aiming to overthrow six despotic forces around the world, each of which had its own disaster condition, such as successfully building nuclear missiles. But as you could only fight one at a time, problems elsewhere got worse, raising the difficulty level there."

Jon notes that the concept highlighted the personality of the despots and soldiers, and the game's visuals, which had a kind of 3D Disney-esque feel, would have further brought that to the fore. He also makes comparisons with Bond, talking about tiny *Cannon Fodder* guys climbing mountains, finding experts and adding them to the team, abseiling down the other side, and then meeting a guy coming the other way with a tank. "It was really enjoyable to work on, and it's a pity it never went anywhere," says Jon, adding that he preferred the game to the original *Cannon Fodder*. **Retro Gamer** suggests a visit to Codemasters' headquarters to ask what it's playing at not getting this game out right now, but Jon thinks the series' time has been and gone: "*Cannon Fodder*… it's old now, and I don't know what else you can do. Sometimes, you just have to leave it."

Perhaps *Cannon Fodder* will rise again, though, either as a handheld-based remake or an entirely new title, and its rightful place in history will eventually be confirmed, once people realise the American pretenders of the day didn't actually come first. In the meantime, we still have one of the best games ever made to play via various means, and Jon has some great memories of working on the classic Amiga title. "The humour and things like the video we made defined what Sensible Software was about as a company, and I really miss those times when you could just do something like that off the top of your head, and not just get away with it, but people would like it," says Jon. "People talked about computer games being the next rock 'n' roll at one dismal point in the past, and our approach with *Cannon Fodder* was as near as anyone really got to that."

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

SEUCK
SYSTEMS: C64, AMIGA, ATARI ST
YEAR: 1987–1989

MEGA LO MANIA
SYSTEMS: AMIGA, ATARI ST, MEGA DRIVE, PC, SNES
YEAR: 1991-1993

SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER (PICTURED)
SYSTEMS: AMIGA, PC, XBLA
YEAR: 1994-2007



MAKING MOVIES

To augment *Cannon Fodder*'s pop song (see 'Pop stars' boxout), Sensible Software created a video for the CD32 version. "We'd been doing our own promotion for a while and thought it'd be fun to do a promo video," recalls Jon, noting that Sensi had a suitably band-like six people at the time.

"The video cost very little – a few hundred quid," says Jon, who remembers working with a local news-station cameraman, getting uniforms from the local fancy dress shop, hiring an army vehicle (with driver) and then looking for a shooting location. "We found a field with poppies in, and the old lady who owned it was happy for us to film there," says Jon. "We were quite lucky, really, and it's another example of how things sometimes just worked well – I wrote a script and a bunch of scenes, we filmed it, got it home and edited it. Then again, I did drama at college, and so music and theatre are pretty normal to me."



遠くの稀で、エキゾチックなゲームを愛する人々のため

FULL OF EASTERN

A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE LIKE NO OTHER – GET LOST WITHIN THIS ARCADE CLASSIC

SALAMANDER DELUXE PACK PLUS

There's a list of reasons as long as our arms as to why we love Konami's Salamander. Shooting a large pulsating brain-mass in the eye is one. Mike Bevan reveals a few more

IN THE KNOW



- **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI
- **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** SEGA SATURN
- **ALSO ON:** PLAYSTATION, PSP
- **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP
- **RELEASED:** 1997
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £40+

CAN'T IMPORT? WHY NOT TRY...

PARODIUS (SEGA SATURN, PLAYSTATION)



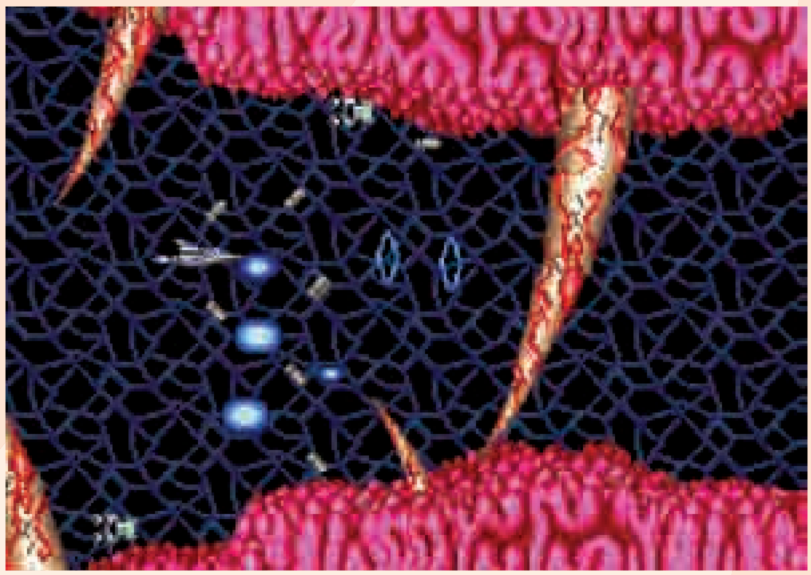
Konami has a long history of irking shooter fans by failing to release *Salamander* or *Gradius*-related console products in the West (the exceptions being *Gradius III* on the SNES, and more recently *Gradius V* on the PS2). For reasons we've never been able to fathom, they were, however, happy to release the far more bizarre *Parodius* (read parody-of-*Gradius*) compilation here, containing *Parodius Da!* and its sequel *Gokujo Parodius!* Both games are like playing *Gradius* programmed by lunatics – but still manage to be utterly brilliant, particularly *Gokujo*. Unfortunately, a limited release means it's nowadays quite hard to track down.





SUPER, SMASHING, GREAT...

Konami's Saturn and PlayStation *Deluxe Packs* are now eminently collectable, so it's a shame they didn't make it out of Japan, bar the European *Parodius* compilation. The other releases in the series were *Gradius Deluxe* (with the Japanese releases of *Nemesis* and *Vulcan Venture*) and *TwinBee Deluxe* (with cute shooters *Detana TwinBee* and *TwinBee Yahoo!*). All come highly recommended by **Retro Gamer**.



メガ駆動機構

We can vividly remember the first time we clamped our eyes on a *Salamander* coin-op – a sea-front arcade during a summer jaunt to Weymouth, circa 1987. Familiar as we were with *Nemesis* (*Gradius*), Konami's shoot-'em-up still managed to elicit an awe-struck sigh as we inserted our 20 pence and launched into a cavernous alien intestinal tract complete with nightmarish fangs, uncanny expanding space raspberries and that famous first-level boss – a tentacle-armed, cycloptic floating brain. We'd discovered the HP Lovecraft of Eighties arcade shooters and it was love at first sight.



» 'Salamander 2 – The Brain Strikes Back'

Later stages, which alternated neatly between vertical- and horizontal-scrolling affairs, similarly impressed, particularly the third level's leaping solar flares and 'roaring' fire dragon. This distinctive snake-like beastie would become an iconic feature of many a Konami shooter, along with *Salamander*'s signature 'ripple laser', a notably snazzy weapon that showered your enemies with radiating neon Hula Hoops.

Although we're still fond of Peter Baron's exquisitely adapted Commodore 64 rendition, and admire the sheer chutzpah of the PC-Engine conversion, it wasn't until the release of the *Deluxe Packs* on Saturn and PlayStation that we were able to revel in true, arcade-perfect *Salamander* loveliness, in the form of the original game and its Japanese cousin, *Life Force*. There was also the surprise inclusion of the then little-seen, graphically superior arcade sequel, *Salamander 2*. For like-

GAMES FROM THE EAST WHICH NEVER MADE IT TO UK SOIL

N PROMISE



» The incredible opening stage of *Salamander 2*.

minded fans, *Salamander Deluxe Pack* was a mouthwatering slice of arcade heaven, and a must-have import.

Though superficially similar to early outings of the *Gradius* series, *Salamander* chucked out the progressive power-up bar in favour of a straightforward pick-up system, and allowed players to carry on without a 'restart' following death, with the option of picking up scattered weaponry – a system reclaimed for the recent and truly brilliant *Gradius V*. And, of course, unlike *Nemesis*, it offered the chance to enjoy some simultaneous co-operative two-player shmupping. As a consequence, though, the game balance was geared towards two players being on-screen, flinging high volumes of homicidal sprites at you, and, despite the lack of restart points, making single-player progression a lot tougher than in *Nemesis*.

The second title in the pack, *Life Force* maintained the difficulty level of *Salamander*, being a graphically modified variant, which restored the weapon power-up bar and rejigged the stage backgrounds (and a number of bosses) to suggest a more unified (and far more garish) bio-organic theme. As a result, it looked a fair bit worse than the original and was less fun to play, despite some additional music tracks and speech. Confusingly, the game here isn't the same as the North American *Life Force* variant, which wasn't changed much from the original Japanese and European *Salamander* game.

Salamander 2, in contrast to its no-nonsense parent, veered a little towards the easy side, but thankfully remained a very attractive sequel. Using a mix of prerendered and hand-drawn sprites and backgrounds, with an eye-catching, almost anime-style appearance, it was, and still is, visually unique among Konami shooters. First impressions caused goose bumps on a similar scale to our initial encounter with its predecessor ten years previously. Negotiating a number of large, strikingly animated segmented worms



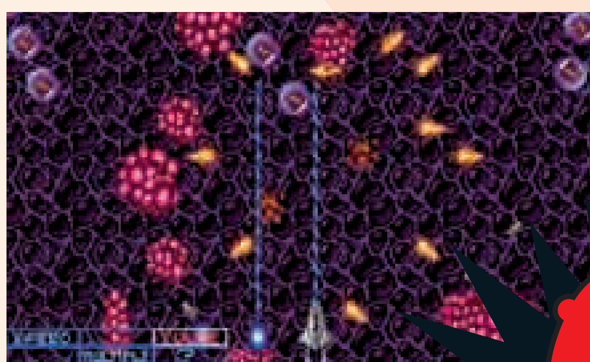
and a colourful alien-encrusted labyrinth to arrive at a familiar showdown with a tentacle-toting brain, we were surprised by a dramatic twist involving an even larger end-of-level boss with a rather nasty set of laughing gear.

The juxtaposition of horizontal to vertical levels was a well-received nod to the original game, although the horizontal-scrolling stages had a tendency to stand out as visually superior and slightly more enjoyable. We're especially fond of a showdown with a deep-space enemy battle fleet, which included a reprise of the four-armed mechanical whirligig from the finale of the original *Salamander*'s second stage. Another standout level was a trek through an incredible parallax asteroid field, prior to infiltrating an enemy base constructed among the formations of floating rock.

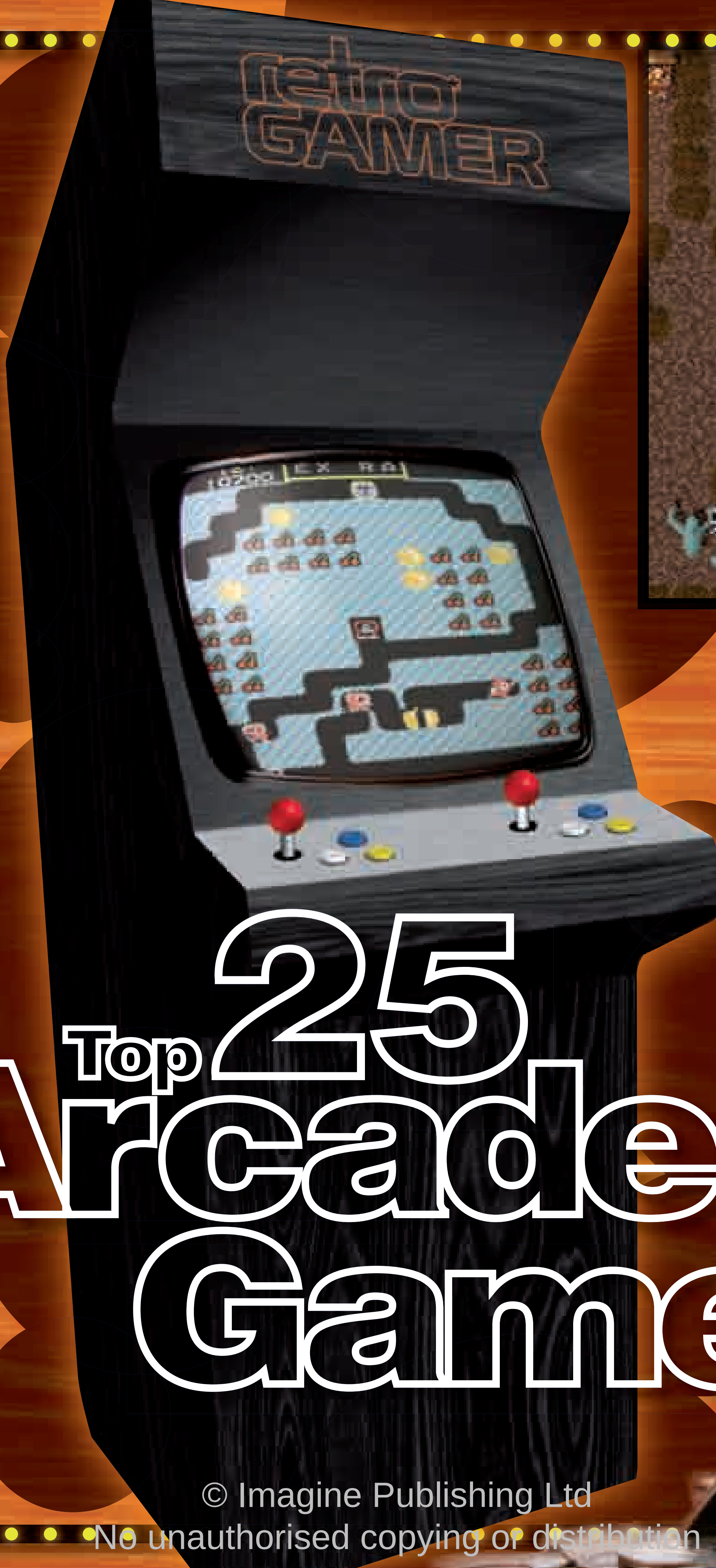
A number of cosmetic tweaks to the weapon mechanics keeps *Salamander 2*'s gameplay feeling fresh. While the original game had you picking up floating 'options' merely as additional bullet drones, the sequel allows you to convert them into laser energy and fire them at the bad guys. Option pick-ups now come in two forms – full and half-size. Holding down the 'option release' button with one or more full options will 'charge' them consecutively, unleashing any powered-up options as homing lasers when you let go. Half-size options produce a protective, circular laser strike around your ship. In practice, effective use of full-option laser blasting pays off nicely, as destroyed enemies liberate further option pick-ups, creating a sort of feedback loop of respawning pick-ups, which comes in very handy but somewhat tames the game's difficulty level. Crank up the default skill setting, and it'll prove fair challenge for any shooter fan.

On either format, *Salamander Deluxe Pack* is a very desirable package, and we're big fans of the wonderfully crisp Sega Saturn version. PSP owners have the option of picking up a recently re-released version of the compilation (sadly, Japanese import only) with the added bonus of the rarely seen and visually magnificent *Xexex* – surely the most stunning of Konami's Nineties arcade shooters. Way back in 1987, the idea of holding a *Salamander* arcade machine in the palm of our hand would have blown our tiny minds. Isn't technological progress great?

» *Life Force* provides a *Gradius*-style power-up system, and ups the raspberry count…



私を読み、私に書くことができ、私に知らせれば好みのゲームはある





Top 25 Arcade Games





Gauntlet II

■ **Year:** 1986

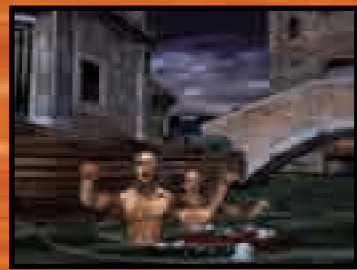
■ **Publisher:** Atari

25

Just scraping into our top 25 is one of the best multiplayer arcade games of all time. Although Atari's sequel is suspiciously similar to the original 1985 hit – something many would argue is no bad thing – it does feature a surprising amount of improvements once you actually start playing.

Being able to choose your class stopped everyone rushing to the Valkyrie's joystick, while the Dragon remains one of the most vicious opponents you can face in a videogame, and the 'It' monster proved that Ed Logg was programming with his tongue lodged firmly in his cheek.

Add in invisible walls, energy-sapping acid pools and far trickier dungeon designs than before and *Gauntlet II* remains the epitome of competitive arcade gaming. Just make sure you play it with plenty of ten pences to hand.



The House Of The Dead 2

■ **Year:** 1998

■ **Publisher:** Sega

24

Lightgun games are relatively simple. The genre was essentially born out of the concept of money in return for quick thrills, a transition started by Sega whereby arcade games became more about paying for a virtual ride rather than the opportunity to skilfully glean a respectable high score.

House Of The Dead is linear, scripted and shallow, but that doesn't make it bad. *HOTD 2* capitalised on the growing trend of zombie games, popularised by *Resident Evil*. Here, the original *HOTD*'s vulgar visuals would be given one of the most impressive facelifts in arcade history, with multi-routes, huge boss battles and this ingenious suffocating, panic-fuelled gameplay, which would set it apart from other lightgun games (*Time Crisis*/*Virtua Cop*) of its kind.



Final Fight

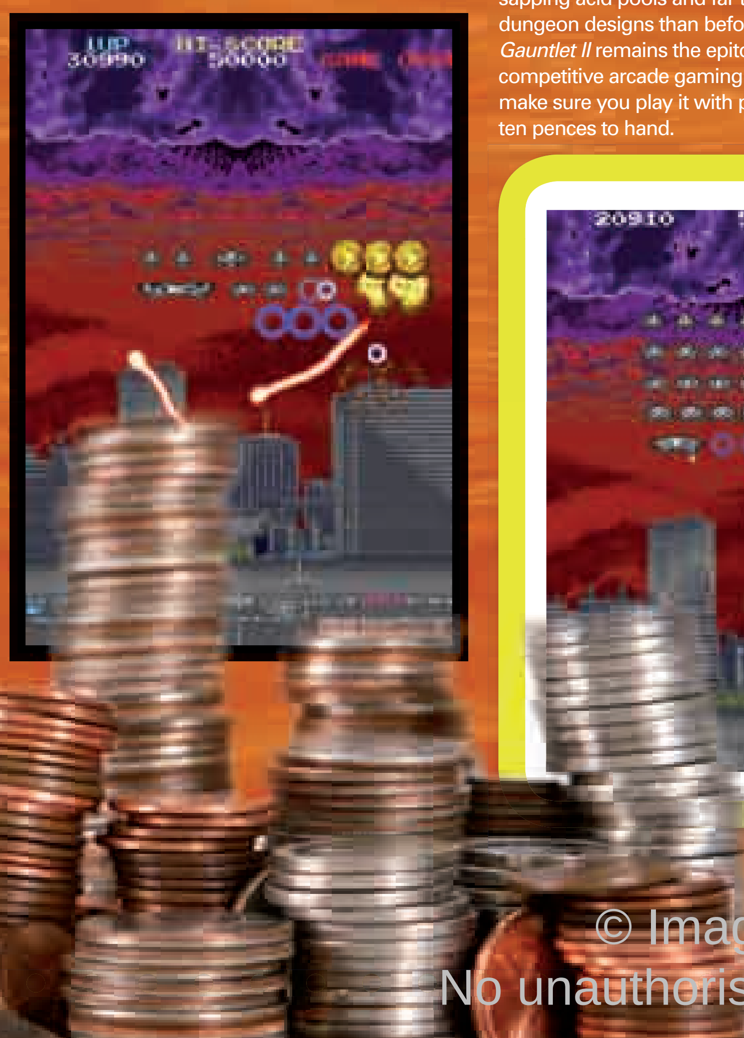
■ **Year:** 1989

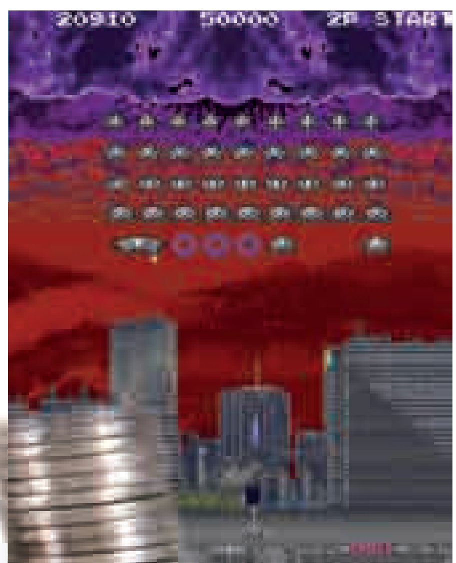
■ **Publisher:** Capcom

23

Final Fight's past is a chequered one. **It had** one genre-defining arcade game, two lazy SNES ports, and a 'knocked out in four minutes' SNES sequel, *Final Fight Tough*, before Capcom crippled any hope we had of seeing Cody, Guy and Hagar again by damning the series forever with a 3D fighting game starring robots. So yeah, pretty chequered, and yet we still like to hold the game up with a real fondness.

But there's a reason for this: the game pretty much redefined the whole side-scrolling fighting genre. Taking the works of *Double Dragon* and *Shadow Warriors*, *Final Fight* helped bring us the likes of *The Punisher*, *Alien Vs. Predator*, *X-Men*, *TMNT* and even *Streets Of Rage*. Like *SFII*, *Final Fight* tapped into the mood of the time, injected it with violence, and went on to leave its mark on the arcade gaming scene forever.





Super Space Invaders '91

■ **Year:** 1990

■ **Publisher:** Taito

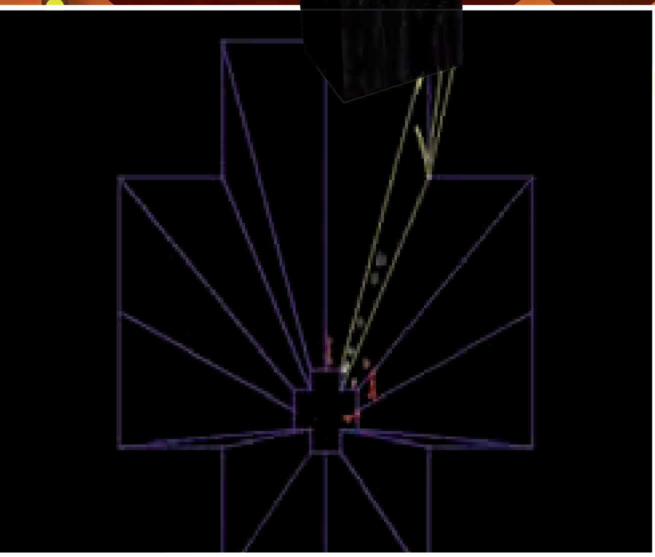
22

It wouldn't be an arcade top 25 without having at least one *Space Invaders* game in it, so rather than go with the historical – but rather bland – original we've instead decided to plump for this excellent effort from 1990.

Totally reinvigorating the franchise with power-ups, varied enemy formations, bosses, a two-player mode and numerous other tricks, *Space Invaders '91* (or *Majestic 12: The Space Invaders Part IV* as it's known in Japan) is second only to the DS's amazing *Space Invaders Extreme*.

Add to that its polished visuals, chirpy tunes and excellent mini-game – that sees you staving off some cow-rustling UFOs – and *Super Space Invaders '91* really is a brilliant blaster that managed to make Taito's long-running franchise cool again.

Top 25 Arcade Games



Tempest

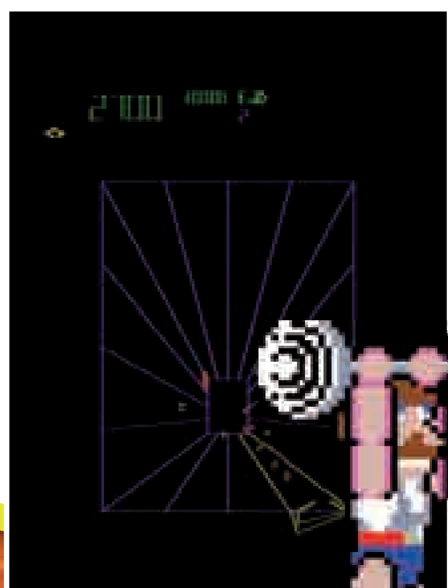
■ **Year:** 1980

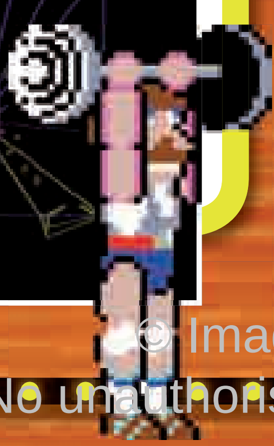
■ **Publisher:** Atari

21

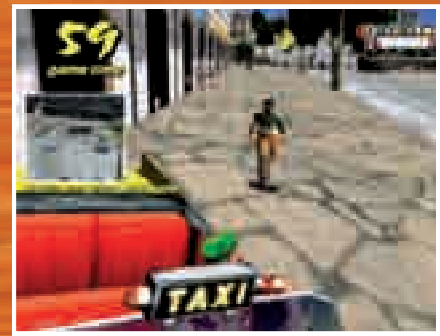
Due to the popularity of the genre there are several shoot-'em-ups in our top 25, so here's our first: Dave Theurer's *Tempest*. Based on a nightmare Theurer once had, *Tempest* is a wonderfully tense blaster that combines beautifully simplistic visuals with maddeningly addictive gameplay. Zooming around various geometric shapes you're required to mow down wave after wave of enemies before moving on to the next level. Care must be taken, however, as enemies will eventually climb to the rim where your fighter resides and attempt to drag you down into the inky depths.

Constantly copied over the years – not less by a certain Jeff Minter – *Tempest* is an intense, hypnotic blaster that remains as fresh as the day it was first conceived. A brilliant blaster that will test your nerves and skill to their limits.









Crazy Taxi

■ **Year:** 1999

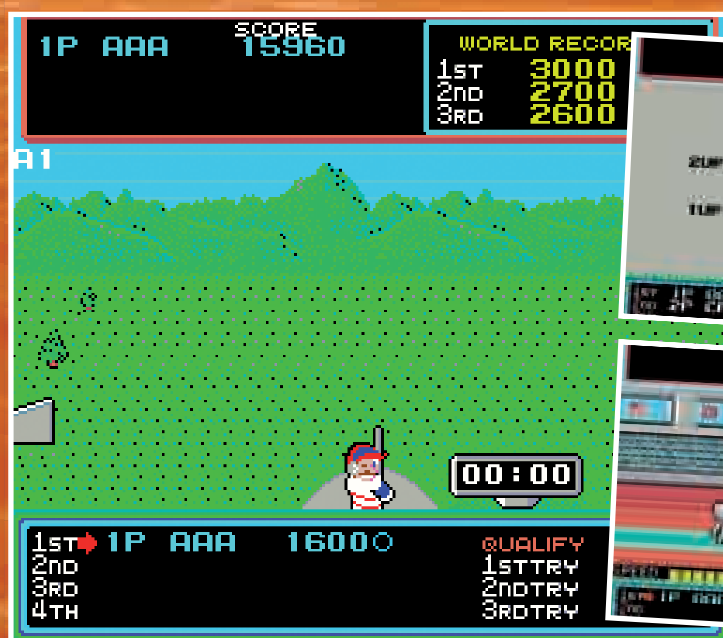
■ **Publisher:** Sega

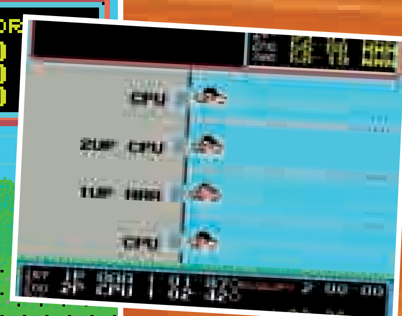
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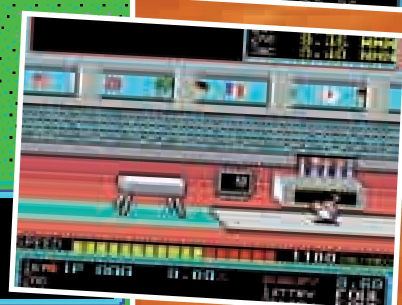
From the second we laid eyes on its banana-looking cabinet and heard the raspy voice of someone sounding like Jim Varney enticing us to make some 'kerraaazy money' we were hooked. *Crazy Taxi* was a refreshing machine when it entered loudly into arcades. It harked back to old-school score (or fare) chasing arcade games, actually looked like a videogame, instead of another miserable looking FPS that seemed to want to do everything in its power to make you want to self-harm after each chapter, and was a bloody good ride, too.

For a mere quid, hours worth of machine hogging awaited anyone skilful enough to loop a complete lap of its Americana setting and juggle the game's moronic, lazy-arsed denizens. *Crazy Taxi* is essentially *OutRun* in a sandbox; driver with passenger[s], sunny looking visuals and levels littered with product placement are crammed into this checkpoint racer.









Hyper Sports

■ **Year:** 1984

■ **Publisher:** Konami

19

Fractionally better than *Track & Field*, *Hyper Sport*'s futuristic and excitable sounding moniker finds it just pipping its predecessor to the winner's podium for simply offering the player a more enjoyable and varied series of events. Visually, a kitten's whisker separates the two games. The familiar moustachioed athletes still make an appearance, however, this time they're participating in a far more mottled selection of sports.

There are seven games in total including freestyle swimming, skeet shooting, horse vault, archery, triple jump, weightlifting and pole vault. All use a three-button-bashing control system (left, action, right) and would ditch *Track & Field*'s trackball. Each of the seven events also came packed with a bonus to unlock, which could earn you extra points for doing ridiculous things like landing on your head when springing from the horse and a poltergeist appearing if you managed to secure a perfect round of skeet murdering.





Chase HQ

■ **Year:** 1988

■ **Publisher:** Taito

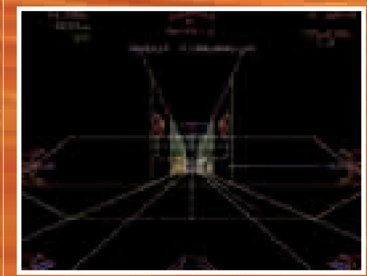
18

Chase HQ is Taito's version of *OutRun* – if Yu Suzuki had decided that whenever you reached a checkpoint flag it would immediately sprout legs and run away, forcing you to speed after and repeatedly ram into the marker until a criminal came rolling out of it across the tarmac.

Capturing perfectly the growing buddy-cop film trend that was popular in the late-Eighties, *Chase HQ* had you playing the role of traffic cop Tony Gibson and his partner (in a work sense) Raymond Broady as they climbed a hierarchy of absconding perps with ridiculous names in sports cars. Like all good action films of the era, vehicles played a huge part in the appeal, and Taito wistfully supplanted us into the seat of a menacing and robust-looking Porsche 928. For many though it was the deft and simple mix of fighting and driving action that would compel us to partake in lengthy periods of excitable quid-feeding.







Star Wars

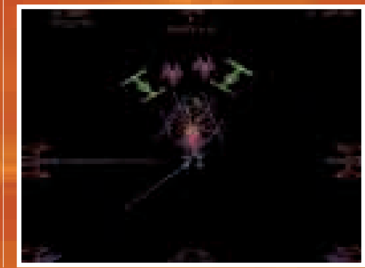
■ **Year:** 1982

■ **Publisher:** Atari

17

The Force is certainly strong with this one. Yes it's one of the most clichéd openers in gaming, but we're **Retro Gamer** – it's what we do. Say what you like about our opening but there can be no argument that *Star Wars* remains one of the greatest movie licences/vector graphic games/shoot-'em-ups to grace an arcade. A favourite from Darran's holidays in Porthcawl, *Star Wars* is every bit as epic as the huge cab it's housed in and offers a sense of immersion and scale that few other games ever have.

Played out over three distinct acts, George Lucas's wondrous world sped by in a dizzying blur of coloured vectors and sampled sound bites that made you feel like you were taking on the Empire single-handedly. While a stand-up version was available, it was the huge sit-down cab that most people sought out, because it made the experience a bit more personal. After all, who wouldn't want to detach themselves from reality for a few minutes to take down hordes of TIE fighters and fly down one of cinema's most infamous trenches?







Dungeons & Dragons: Shadow Over Mystara

■ **Year:** 1996

■ **Publisher:** Capcom

16

We can't believe it either, a *D&D* game at number 16. We guess we're going to have to do some convincing here, seeing as it's besting the likes of *Crazy Taxi* and *Final Fight*. Well, to put a rather fine point on it, *Shadow Over Mystara* is probably the best side-scrolling fighter you're ever likely to play. The game, which is the second in Capcom's two-part *D&D* series, impresses us due to the sheer amount of depth it has to offer.

Every ounce of the game is meticulously fleshed out. Every character feels unique, is a joy to use and commands a ridiculous amount of wildly imaginative attacks and spells. Progression through the game is multi-tiered, so it holds a considerable amount of replay value. Its brilliant four-button control system – attack, select, jump and use – makes the unusual meshing of layered RPG and short-thrills arcade brawler work brilliantly. *Shadow Over Mystara*, with its depth and variety, feels like it's swimming against a tide of arcade conceptions, and we love it for that.









Space Harrier

■ **Year:** 1985

■ **Publisher:** Sega

14 **From Crazy Taxi** to *Sonic The Hedgehog*, Sega's mantra has always been to impart a sense of exhilaration into its games. It was *Space Harrier* that essentially spearheaded this trend. Who could forget the first time they ever laid eyes on its scary looking full-motion cockpit, probably the first time many of us saw and experienced a fairground ride and videogame spliced together.

The game was a simple on-rails 3D shooter with fast scaling and colourful quasi-3D backdrops being pushed towards the glass. The reality though is that it wasn't doing anything that *3D Deathchase* hadn't done two years prior. The added factor of dizzying motion as you ran or jetted through the game's colourful landscapes only added to the experience and value of the game. Those who bailed out early would still take away the thrill of being span about in a chair for a few minutes, and that was handy because it was a princely pig to finish. With an exhaustive 18 stages to work through that climaxed in a taxing boss-rush section, even Sega must've felt no one would ever see the thing to completion, because it also boasts one the lamest videogame end screens you're ever likely to come by.

Street Fighter II: The World Warrior

■ **Year:** 1991

■ **Publisher:** Capcom

15 **By the end** of the Nineties we were all a bit sick of *Street Fighter II*. Capcom would milk its arcade popularity for all its worth with loads of spin-offs, tweaks and 'super, hyper, turbo' variations that would spill out on to home consoles. The game itself ushered in a new dawn of fighting games, stringing attacks, special moves with cool nicknames, superhuman characters with unique fighting styles and multiple boss fights. Its unprecedented popularity would come to reignite a fire in the belly of arcade gaming and bring the one-on-one fighter back to the Western masses.

Street Fighter II encompasses solid looking visuals, simple gameplay and a brilliant multiplayer mode. A want to refine your skills and learn and execute special moves with your favourite characters – in a bid to impress rubberneckers – meant *SFII* also had a compulsive pull, and its notoriety spread like wildfire. When Nintendo announced *SFII* was going to be a launch title for the SNES, before the machine even touched down on British soil its future would be secured. No arcade game has ever eclipsed replicating this kind of anticipation from its home conversion.



"Garou: Mark Of The Wolves gets the most play in the Retro Gamer office"

Garou: Mark Of The Wolves

■ **Year:** 1999

■ **Publisher:** SNK

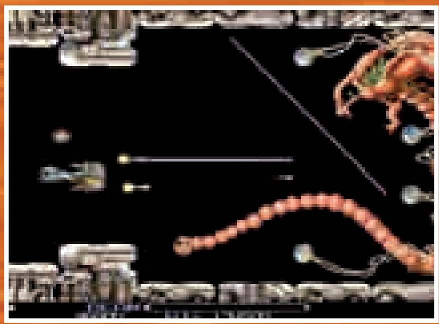
13 **The game that** gets played the most in the **Retro Gamer** office at lunchtimes is *Garou: Mark Of The Wolves*. The final and finest episode of the *Fatal Fury* franchise finds its combatants in possibly the most balanced fighting game ever made.

Set ten years after *Real Bout Fatal Fury*, only one of the Bogard brothers (Terry) would make it into the game, but joining him would be a crew of new, stunningly balanced fighters, most of whom would mimic the fighting styles of popular past characters from the series. The action and potency of the specials were brilliantly capped. Fights often felt like fights, never did they feel governed or swamped with explosive specials and supers, making it accessible to newcomers. We could go on for reams of text celebrating the brilliance of *Garou: Mark Of The Wolves* and its many merits, but we've still got a whole host of games to work through.

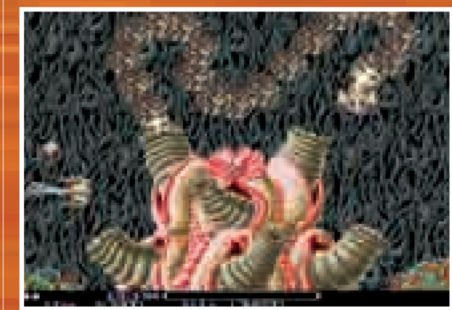












R-Type

■ Year: 1987

■ Publisher: Irem

12

The Arrowhead R-9 is one of the most iconic spaceships in shoot-'em-up history. Its flat-headed, ocean-blue cockpit provided a subtle beacon of hope against the evil Bydo Empire. *R-Type*'s iconic biomechanical-looking adversaries were a blatant nod to Giger's clam-headed Xenomorphs from *Alien*, and fused a foreboding sense of loneliness into the action that few, if any, shoot-'em-ups have ever recaptured.

The genius of Irem, to emphasise this emotion, was to add a faceless companion in the shape of 'the force' shield, which you could attach to the front or back of your ship, giving you a sense of hope and a slight edge over the bio-mechanised alien race and you'd feel naked and lonely without it. *R-Type* is also packed with iconic and memorable bosses, with the most notable being the prehistoric sounding Dobkeratops whose lashing tail and foetal-like looks send a shiver down our spine even today.

Defender

■ Year: 1980

■ Publisher: Williams

10

Defender is not an easy game. The game world scrolls along at an insanely fast pace, enemies come at you thick and fast, while the control system is an incredibly complex beast that takes an absolute age to fully master.

Despite these hurdles, however, Eugene Jarvis's *Defender* remains an utterly sublime blaster and it's a testament to his skill as a game designer that two of his classic titles have made it into our hallowed top ten.

Impossibly slick, *Defender* is a game that leaves no margin for error. Yet despite it's seemingly insane toughness, you'll constantly return to that bulky control panel with dreams of finally finishing stage ten with a complete set of humans rescued, if only so you can finally prove that you won't be bested by a creation of wood and metal. Of course, you'll probably never manage it, but that won't stop you from trying, such is the sheer addictiveness of Jarvis's iconic blaster.

For like *Robotron*, *Defender*'s mistakes are always yours and yours alone to make and whenever your ship does get blown into tiny pixels you'll never blame the game, just your own ineptness.

As with *Mr. Do!*, *Defender* is a colossal achievement, technical in this case, and is easily deserving of its high placing. When you consider some of the other titles that appeared in 1980 – *Pac-Man*, *Space Invaders Part II* – it's hardly surprising that *Defender* went and blew our tiny little minds.



Pac-Man Arrangement

■ Year: 1996

■ Publisher: Namco

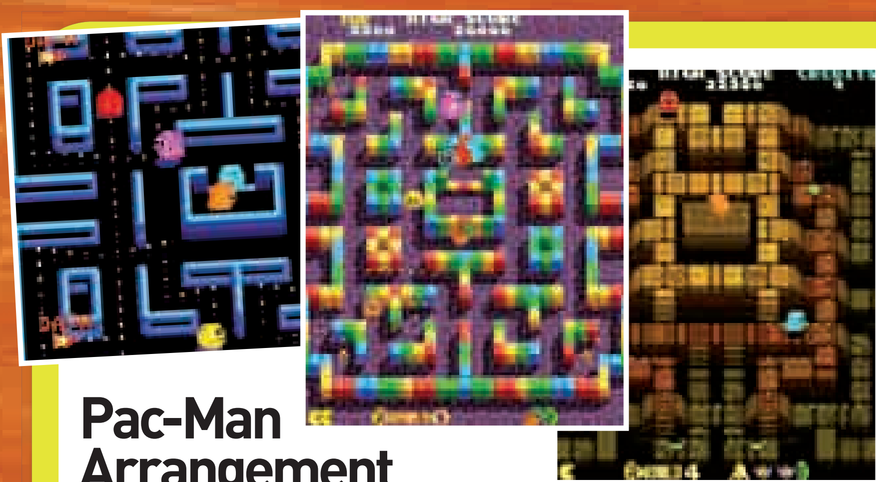
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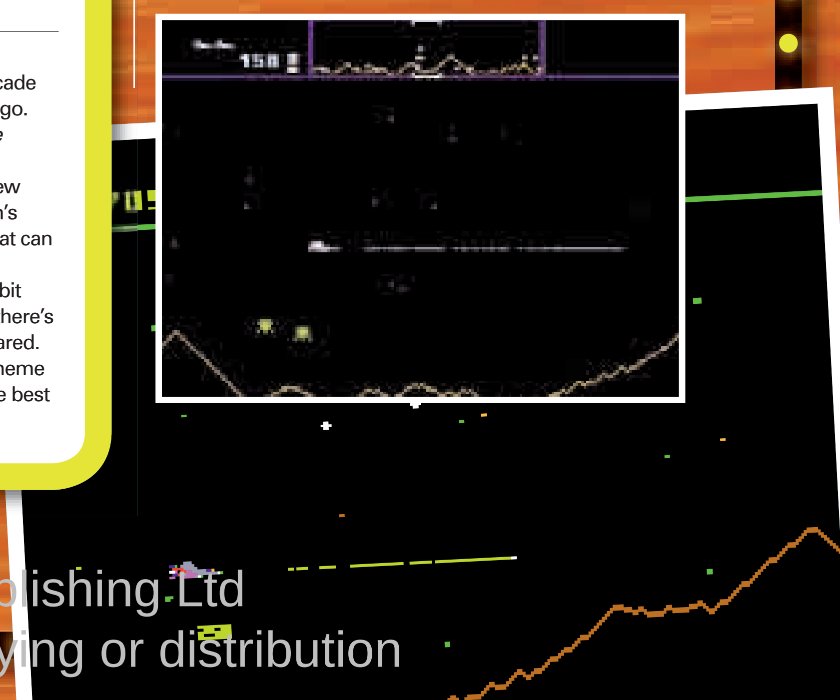
It's possible that many of you won't have played *Pac-Man*'s greatest arcade outing as it's part of a Namco compilation released just over a decade ago.

Nevertheless, it's an essential addition to our list, as, like *Super Space Invaders '91*, it's another perfect example of a classic game that's been completely overhauled for a new audience and is all the better for it. Packed with new features, including a dash attack that stuns enemies, a mirror that parallels Pac-Man's movements and a handy speed-up, *Pac-Man Arrangement* also has a new ghost that can combine with the four originals and bestow them with previously unseen powers.

Blinky turns into a bull and can charge Pac-Man, Pinky takes on the form of a rabbit and can jump to new locations, while Inky creates a mirror image of himself. Then there's Clyde who bulks up and begins dropping pills in locations Pac-Man has already cleared.

Add in a variety of brilliantly designed levels, a familiar riff on *Pac-Man*'s jaunty theme tune and some seriously gorgeous-looking visuals and Namco's update is easily the best version of *Pac-Man* to ever reach arcades.





Top 25 Arcade Games





Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike

Year: 1999

Publisher: Capcom

9

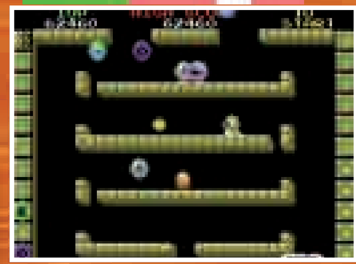
Capcom's wonderful fighter just keeps on giving. Even today, with the arcade release of *Street Fighter IV* almost here – we're still waiting for Capcom to invite us up to its London office where it has a machine – we're still playing and loving *Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike*. Released nearly a decade ago and the game's third iteration (after *New Generation* and *2nd Impact*), *3rd Strike* is the finest 2D brawler yet and proves that you don't need flashy polygons in order to create a fantastic fighting game.

While there are undeniably balance issues – there should be ballads written about the legend that is dirty Ken – the character roster remains superb with the new characters being every bit as memorable as the likes of Dhalsim, Zangief and Blanka. It's the gameplay though that leaves the biggest lasting impression. Even after all these years we've yet to fully master a single character from *3rd Strike* and we're still discovering new tricks and combinations. No other fighter, 2D or otherwise, continues to impress us as much as *3rd Strike* does.

Capcom's fourth iteration of the classic series is going to have to be all sorts of amazing if it plans to usurp *Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike*'s current position as the greatest 2D fighter of all time.









Bubble Bobble

Year: 1986

Publisher: Taito

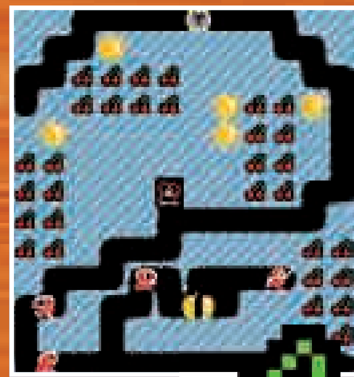
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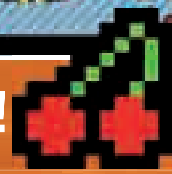
As with many games in our top 25, *Bubble Bobble* is another example of a simple-looking premise that hides an incredibly complex beast under its cheerful exterior. It's also very cute, with the player taking on the role of a bubble-blowing dinosaur who must dispatch a battalion of similarly cute enemies.

Indeed, each cleverly constructed screen is filled with a selection of painfully sweet monsters to defeat before you can move on to the next of *Bubble Bobble*'s 100 stages. Enemies are destroyed by trapping them in bubbles, then head-butting your foe before its flimsy prison bursts. Beaten enemies then turn into a variety of goodies that can be wolfed down for precious bonus points.

The catch here though is that whereas items seem to appear randomly they're actually generated by everything you do. From the number of jumps your dino makes to the amount of bubbles he blows will determine what appears, meaning that Taito's cutesy game offers a huge amount of depth for those prepared to learn all its secrets.







Mr. Do!

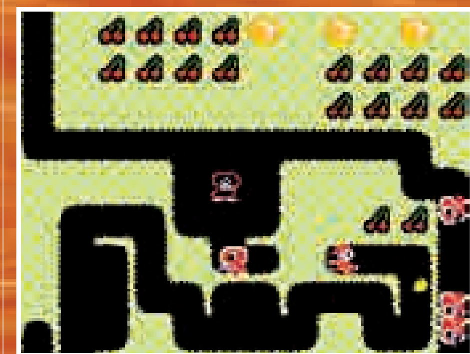
Year: 1982

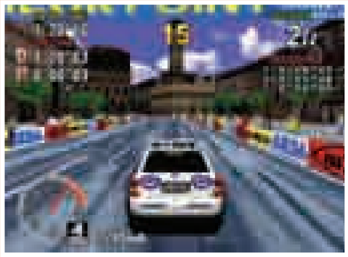
Publisher: Universal

7

Few early arcade games were as varied as Universal's excellent *Mr. Do!*. While *Pac-Man* saw you completing levels by munching all of a stage's pills and *Space Invaders* required you to mow down wave after wave of aliens, *Mr. Do!* offered some surprisingly complex gameplay mechanics that allowed you to complete each of the fiendishly designed levels in a variety of different ways.

Extremely hard to convert to home systems of the time (only the BBC Micro has anything near what could be considered an accurate version of the game on an 8-bit system), *Mr. Do!* remains a shining example of one of gaming's greatest eras and is a title that continually amazes with its beautifully defined graphics, chirpy theme tune and captivating gameplay. Guiding that little clown around a maze, avoiding meanies, throwing power-balls and collecting cherries remains one of gaming's most precious experiences and it's a testament to its high standing in our chart that no similar game has ever been able to better it. Quite simply one of the most refreshing games you'll ever get to play.






Sega Rally Championship

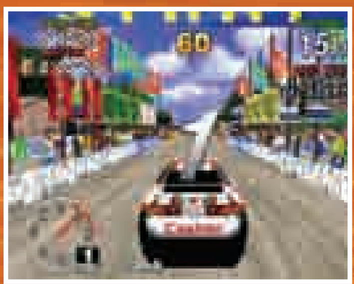
■ **Year:** 1995

■ **Publisher:** Sega

6

The first of two entries from Sega in this top ten, *Sega Rally* is easily the most complete and fleshed out racing game ever released in the arcades. When we pop the bonnet there really is not one section of the game we would want to tweak, refine or tune up. *Sega Rally* is the perfect blueprint for what an arcade racing game should play out like; great looking, accessible to newcomers, exhilarating, solid controls and simple.

As we've said in the past, the tracks are the real stars of the show here. Meticulously constructed, vast wide tracks of muddy terrain that harshly switched to tarmac, puddles and gravel, and your wheels behaving responsibly to the dips in traction, meant your steering would need to react delicately with every corner and turn. You can spend a lifetime learning the little nuances of each track, as you try to shave just a little more off your lap record. It might seem a simple racing game to outsiders but scratch at the surface of *Sega Rally* and beneath lives a game of real return value.




Missile Command

■ **Year:** 1980

■ **Publisher:** Atari

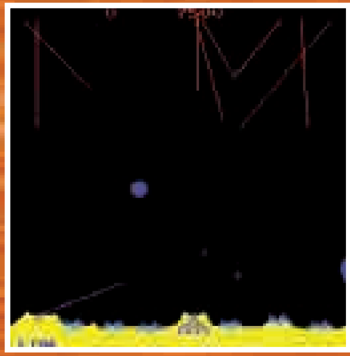
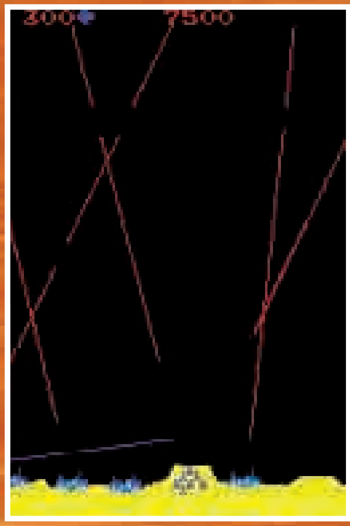
5

There were some great arcade games spawned in 1980 – *Pac-Man, Tempest, Defender* – but this effort from Dave Theurer is one of the best.

With its wonderfully responsive trackball and its simplistic yet hectic gameplay, *Missile Command* is an engaging blaster that proved to be a massive money-earner for Atari.

Missile Command is one of those rare games that can't be fully emulated in the home due to its trackball origins. Numerous conversions have come and gone over the years, but a joystick is no match for the speed and precision that a trackball can offer, especially once the difficulty cranks up and the sky starts raining missiles.

It can be seen as a reference to the impact the Cold War was having at the time and it's alleged to have given Dave Theurer nightmares while he was creating it, but regardless of the possibly deeper meanings, there's no denying that it remains great fun to play. A true classic that should be experienced by everyone.



Asteroids

■ **Year:** 1979

■ **Publisher:** Atari

4

Atari was a huge dominant force in the arcades throughout the Eighties and early Nineties, so it should perhaps come as no surprise to find so many of its games doing so well in our top 25.

Effectively a single-player version of *Space War*, Ed Logg's masterpiece retains the hallmarks of many classic arcade games in so much that its inherent simplicity and lack of a true ending (bar when a game actually crashes like *Pac-Man* or *Donkey Kong*) simply allowed you to constantly return and better yourself.

Like *Star Wars*, it's the sheer enormity of *Asteroids* that helps to make it such a thrilling experience. Your tiny, seemingly insignificant space craft barely registers next to the huge space boulders it has to shoot down, while eventually destroying them into smaller bits of debris only makes your task considerably more difficult. And yet it's this constant buzz of facing seemingly overwhelming odds that becomes *Asteroids*' trump card, as you'll continually create new strategies to deal with your passive aggressor.

Now nearly three decades old, Ed Logg's seminal blaster has lost none of its charm and it easily deserves its reputation as Atari's bestselling arcade game. If you've never played it, you don't deserve to be called a gamer.



Top 25 Arcade Games



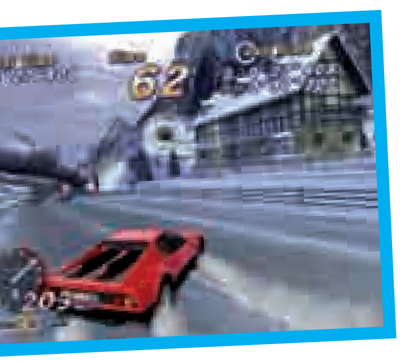
OutRun 2 SP

■ **Year:** 2004

■ **Publisher:** Sega

3 **Sega Rally may** have made it to the number one spot in our list of top 25 racers, but we pondered over the decision for a long while. The reason: a game that never even made it on to the list at all. The game in question is *OutRun 2 SP*, which came out a good 18 years after Suzuki's Out Run and feels less a sequel and more a refining of the original game. All the truly great aspects of *OutRun* are wholesaled over – the music, the sunshine, and all those iffy elements like the woolly handling that always gave the impression that you were driving over a stretch of ice at every bend, have been rectified.

Power-sliding, a term pioneered and executed masterfully by Namco in *Ridge Racer*, became a term executed equally, if not better, by Sega. The sensation of hopping into the front seat of a red Testarossa with a superficial nymphomaniac blonde cheerleader that promised you the best night of your life if you finished a race (well, that's how we always saw her anyway) *is the* sensation this game faithfully projects.



Now the most important aspect of any racing game – even more important than the controls (as long as they're not completely broken) – is the track designs. They essentially play the role of 'levels' and are commonly where variety will find us.

Now what would be the point in owning a Ferrari if you could only drive it in an enclosed piece of cordoned off circular tarmac decorated with trees and signage, and driving involved following an invisible racing line and never wandering off this linear path for fear of seeing your car collide with something and grind to a screeching halt? None. Surely you'd rather let the roof down and take in some glorious clement surroundings, choose your own style of racing where success is measured on control of the car rather than memorising tracks and managing to stay awake.

This is the reason why the *Ridge Racer* games are so great; they would find and take a racing line between driving and fun. It's something we knew *OutRun* had in it, but took a while and several attempts to finally get there.



Robotron: 2084

■ **Year:** 1982

■ **Publisher:** Williams

2 **While we'd never** like to say that any game is perfect, it's hard to think of any other word that sums up *Robotron* so… perfectly. Harking back to the good old days when controls were simple and aesthetics were even simpler, Eugene Jarvis's seminal blaster is a game that grabs you firmly by the balls and never lets go. The fact that we still return to it 26 years after we first encountered it in an arcade in Porthcawl is testament to *Robotron*'s greatness and now, nearly three decades later, no other run-'n'-gun has ever been able to best it.

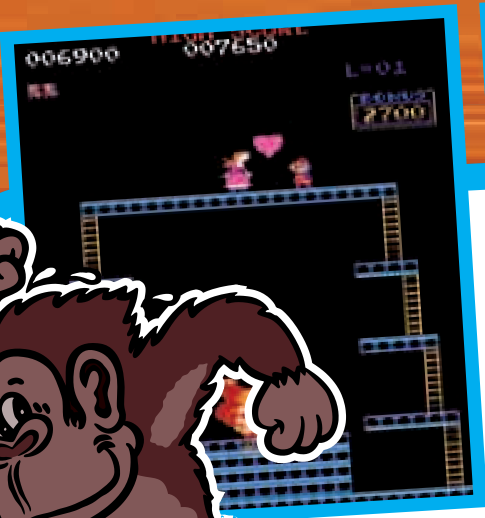
A simple case of kill or be killed, *Robotron*'s gameplay couldn't be easier – you're dropped off into an arena of enemy robots and must rescue as many humans as possible while avoiding and destroying as many enemies as you can. It's *Robotron*'s risk and reward that helps springboard it past so many other similar shooters, and the main reason why it remains so addictive. With so many enemies constantly on screen you're required to squeeze yourself through ridiculously tiny gaps in order to stay ahead of the robotic mob, especially if you want to save those on-screen humans before they're taken out by a rampaging droid.

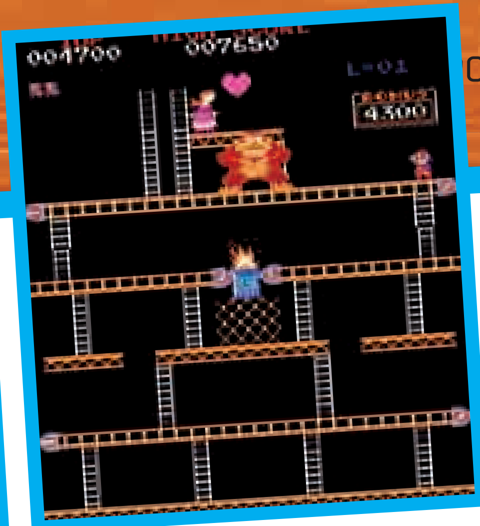
To complete your seemingly impossible task you've got access to quite possibly one of the greatest control systems of all time – the fact that numerous Xbox Live Arcade games are still using it only cements its reputation. One joystick controls your on-screen avatar, the other your direction of fire. As with many aspects of *Robotron* it's a simple idea that works brilliantly in execution.

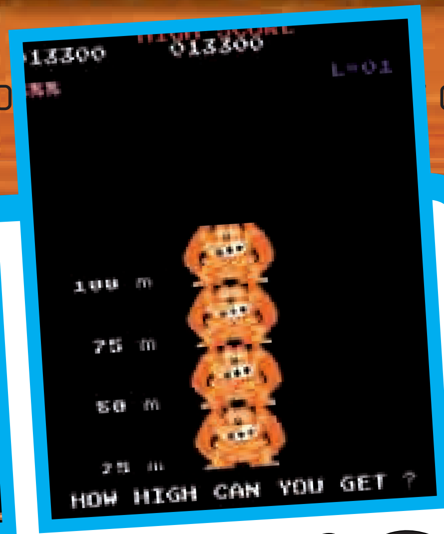
Constantly copied, but never bettered, *Robotron* is the very definition of the perfect arcade blaster. It grabs you with its simplicity and raucous sound effects but refuses to let you go until your last ten pence is spent and your arms are a quivering mass of useless flesh. Brutal, but oh so utterly brilliant.

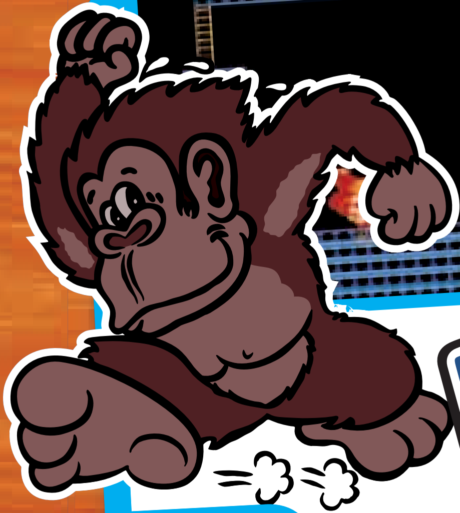












DONKEY KONG™





1

■ **Year:** 1981

■ **Publisher:** Nintendo

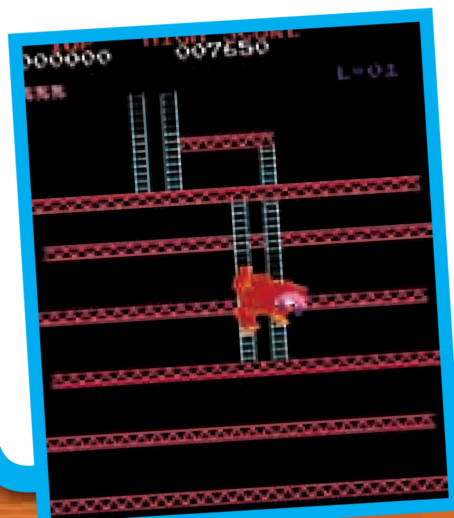
It took one disaster, four screens and three characters to jettison a Hanafuda card/toy manufacturer into the relatively uncharted waters of videogame entertainment. The lovelorn ashes of a flailing US Nintendo arcade game called *Radar Scope* coupled with the fertile imagination of a young wet-earred Miyamoto – under the guidance of Nintendo's janitor-turned-technical-engineer Gunpei Yokoi – would come to change the way we look at arcade games forever.

Donkey Kong signalled in a new dawn of arcade game where characters expressed real emotion and personality, playing their parts inside games with a real sense of narrative. Timeless, addictive, humorous and defining, these are the qualities that find *Donkey Kong* standing aloft a solid structure of classic arcade games, beating his chest with that stupid big grimace slapped over his hairy chops.

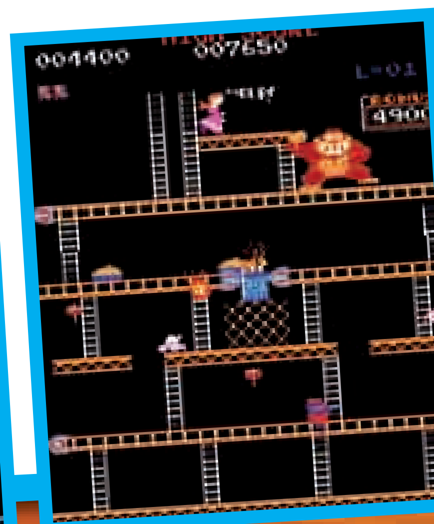
Like *Space Invaders* and *Asteroids*, the rules of *Donkey Kong* were simple and clear-cut thanks to an ingenious 'attract screen' that brilliantly enticed players to part with their cash. A maltreated (we would later learn) giant gorilla kidnaps his master's woman before putting her on a pedestal above several ramps of girders in a construction site. Playing the role of the ape's master, Jumpman, you are stationed at the base of the screen and must negotiate each platform carefully in order to reach the top of the screen and ensure her safety. Making the task infinitely more difficult was the titular Donkey Kong, a big ape with a lifetime's supply of barrels with which to cascade down the girders and spell an end to our hero's wood-chopping, and eventually his plumbing career, too.

Four looping screens and 100 metres of panic and points stood between Jumpman and the tender lips of his prize, Lady. The first 'Girder' stage, which we've already touched on, provided a real appetiser for the challenge that lay ahead. The 'Pie Factory' was an erroneous moniker given to the second stage for its conveyor-riding cement plates that looked a lot like pies, and was also by far the easiest and quickest screen to negotiate, providing an opportunity for many players to catch a much-needed breath. The 'Elevator' stage, a level that requires almost lion-tamer-like timing and spatial awareness, needed a real familiarity with the machine to really negotiate confidently on the later screens. Finally, the hardest stage in the game 'Rivets' was a maddening and sporadically shifting gambit that saw Donkey Kong not giving up the girl without a real fight.

The game has recently been thrust back into the spotlight again through the cinematic release of the biopic documentary *The King Of Kong: A Fistful Of Quarters*. While the film is fascinating for showing the extreme lengths some people will go to to stay at the top of their game, it was equally as fascinating for exposing the raw mechanics and genius of *Donkey Kong*. Many of the people inside that Twin Galaxies circle appear to view *Donkey Kong* as *the* videogame to try to master. It's the one game that seems to bring all the respect, fame and notoriety… even after 27 years.







THE MAKING OF...

Q*bert

HE'S ORANGE, GOT A BIG NOSE, TALKS COMPLETE GIBBERISH AND IS RATHER USED TO FALLING OFF PYRAMIDS. IT CAN ONLY BE Q*BERT, THE STAR OF A FIENDISHLY DIFFICULT YET ADDICTIVE ARCADE GAME. KIM WILD TALKS @!#?@! WITH WARREN DAVIS AND JEFF LEE ABOUT ONE OF GOTTLIEB'S MOST UNUSUAL VIDEOGAME ICONS

IN THE KNOW



» **PUBLISHER:** GOTTLIEB/MYLSTAR
» **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
» **RELEASED:** 1982
» **PLATFORMS:** ARCADE (CONVERTED TO NUMEROUS 8-BIT COMPUTERS AND CONSOLES)
» **GENRE:** ARCADE
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £80+ FOR ORIGINAL CABINET

Back in the early Eighties, Gottlieb was well known for its line of pinball machines but for a brief time, it branched out into the world of video arcade games by creating a new division headed by Howie Rubin. Soon another artist was needed to work on the storyboards and to mock up artwork for test pieces, which is how *Q*bert's* co-creator Jeff Lee arrived at the company.

After working on several arcade titles including *Caveman*, *Quizimodo* and a superhero game, Jeff Lee experimented with background tiles on Blue Box, an Intel computer that was a monitor linked to a graphics card. "Kan Yabumoto, a hardware programmer, had this up and running for his own purposes. While gazing at this pyramidal structure from across my drawing board, it seemed to me that a game was waiting to be teased out of it," explains Jeff. With an idea in place, Jeff began creating various creatures that could populate the cubic pyramid, which came about as a result of doodling, with a certain orange critter as the main character. "I just drew him. And right from the start he was the initial character, fully formed, except he wasn't originally furry. I often put large noses on cartoon characters. The orange just seemed right. I don't think I ever rendered him in another colour – maybe it was a nice contrast with the blue cubes and black background. Incidentally, an early sketch of Sam is also in orange. And Wrong-Way was blue!







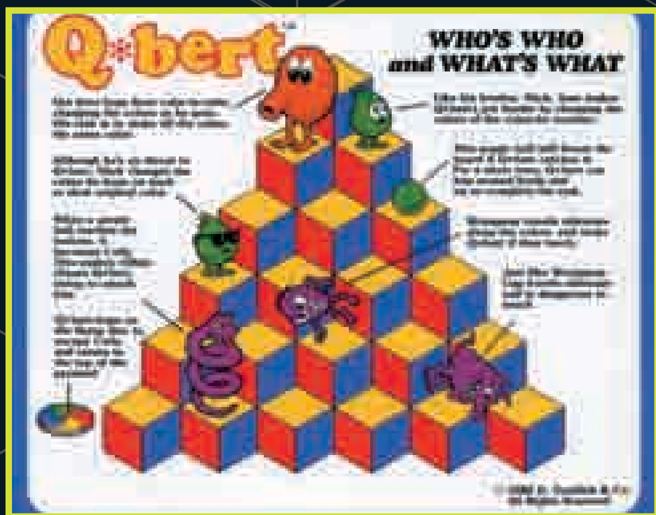
CELEBRITY STATUS

While many arcade games command an audience, few are as memorable as Doris Self. On 1 July 1984, Doris Self (aged 58) held a record score of 1,112,300 on *Q*bert* and is in the Guinness World Records for being the oldest competitive female gamer. "A friend of mine sent me a newspaper article about Doris some years ago. Sadly I never met her, but was excited to see her represented in the documentary *King Of Kong*," says Warren Davis. "Well, God bless her! She's a better player than I! Long may her record hold!" says Jeff. Two years later her score was beaten, but *Pac-Man* record holder Billy Mitchell ensured she kept playing by giving her a *Q*bert* arcade machine. At 79 years of age, Doris Self attempted a new record, but sadly failed and was tragically killed after a car accident in 2006.





» *Q*bert's Qubes* was the official sequel to *Q*bert* and played like Tic-Tac-Toe.



My original written and hand-drawn proposal had a hairless Q*bert and armless enemies on different planes. The look of those foes did not survive."

Around about this time, Warren Davis was hired after applying for a job advertising for videogame programmers. He saw Jeff playing with the pyramid, complete with critters, and asked if they could be used in a game while Warren gave himself "an exercise of programming randomness and gravity by having balls drop down a pyramid of cubes." With the basics in place, the next key step involved tops of the cubes changing colour when Q*bert landed on them. "One night I was working late," explains Warren. "I'd got so far as to have a pyramid of cubes with balls dropping from the top of the screen and bouncing down. I had the orange player character jumping around the pyramid. So this one night, I was playing what I had so far, with Ron Waxman, the VP of engineering, sitting behind me. I remember playing the game, jumping around from cube to cube avoiding the balls, and wondering what the next step should be. And Ron's voice came from behind me… 'What if the cubes changed colour when he lands on them?' It was perfect."

It was at this stage that Warren implemented the unique control system, which meant that the main character could only move in diagonal directions across the board and couldn't go side to side. Anyone who first plays *Q*bert* can attest it takes quite some getting used to and it was a decision that came under scrutiny at the time. "Having the joystick mounted in a standard orientation made no sense, so I stuck to my guns and deflected those criticisms whenever they were brought up. As I recall, that was pretty often," remarks Warren.

"The '@!#?@!' was my doing," reveals Jeff on the asterisk bubble that gives Q*bert his distinct personality. "I just presented it as given on a lark. It actually lasted for quite some time and went out on test with that type of title. One of my few journal entries regarding my Gottlieb work is for Saturday 11 September 1982: 'Meet Mom & Roland at Brunswick Bowl and play @!#?@!' A player constantly! I felt at this point we had a winner on our hands." The unique speech bubble inspired Dave Theil, Gottlieb's sound wizard at the time, to come up with the gibberish the character is renowned for within the technology's limitations. "The sound board had a phoneme generator," explains Warren. "You could string phonemes together to get English phrases, but it sounded very mechanical and lifeless. Rather than program English phrases, he had Q*bert speak by emitting the phonemes at random. There are only two actual English phrases generated by the game. When you turn the power on, it says, 'Hello, I'm turned on.' And when a game ends, it says 'Bye-Bye'." Rick Tighe came up with the idea of adding the



» [NES] The controls were a little tricky, but the NES still received a good port of Q*bert.







"Q*bert has not become a crossword puzzle standard, though it was in the New York Times in 2007" Jeff Lee



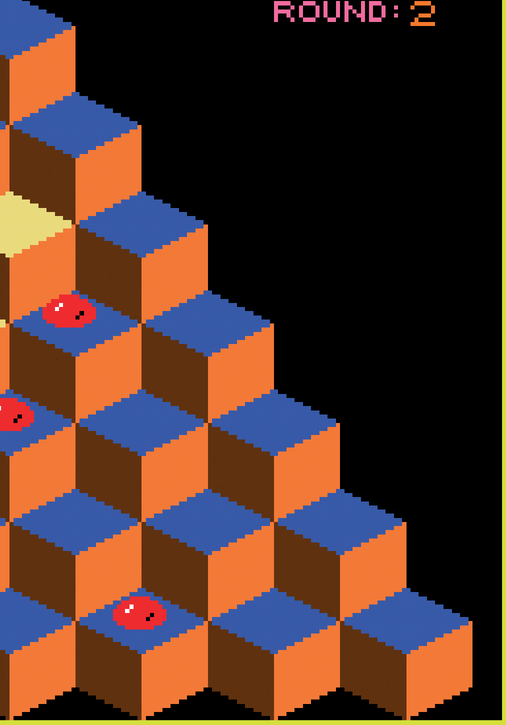
pinball hardware, which generated the mechanical 'KA-CHUNK' sound when Q*bert falls off the pyramid.

Warren recalls how the game was tested: "When it was getting closer to production, we would build engineering samples and place the cabinets in arcades for testing. Part of this was to see how much the game collected. But we would also hang around to watch people. When *Q*bert* was first tested in an arcade, some people would jump off three times in quick succession, basically losing their quarter in about ten seconds. For a while, I was terrified that nobody was going to get it, but strangely enough, most people would come back and give it another try, and eventually get the hang of it. We also had focus groups. I sat in on them, watching people play through a one-way mirror."

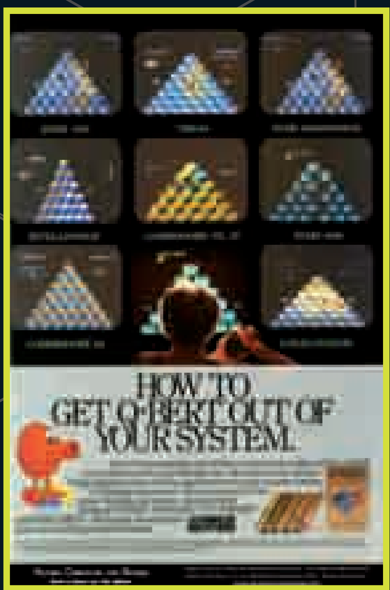
Yet while the game proved that it would be popular, it still didn't have a name aside from the project name of 'Cubes' (Jeff Lee's original idea 'Snots And Boogers' was discounted). "Everyone agreed that the name of the player character should be the name of the game," explains Warren. "We went around to everyone who worked at Gottlieb and generated a list of names, maybe 50 or 75 names. Most were terrible. None were chosen. Our vice president of marketing, Howie Rubin, wanted to name the game '@!#?@!?', and even though pretty much everyone thought that was ridiculous, a number of games went out on test with that name on the marquee. One of the objections was 'How are people going to ask for it, or talk about it?' and Howie said, "If the game's as good as we think it is, they'll find a way." Realising we needed to come up with a name, we had a meeting. I don't remember how long it lasted, but there was a point at which someone threw out the name 'Hubert'. That got written on the whiteboard in front of the room. Someone else made the connection with the idea of 'cubes' and it became 'Cubert'. That didn't look right, so someone else, it may have been Rich Tracy, our art director, changed it to 'Q-bert'. And everyone just knew it was right. (The dash may have become an asterisk before the meeting was over)."

The main character of Q*bert became as popular as the game itself, going on to generate a vast array of memorabilia including action figures, wind-up toys, board games and colouring books making it one of the most merchandised arcade games after *Pac-Man*. At one stage, an animated TV series was produced ("If anyone has copies, let me know!" – Jeff Lee) and Jeff was involved with the creation of a fizzy drink commercial. However, none of the merchandise was ever sent to Warren or Jeff, resulting in them having to purchase items personally.

Yet while *Q*bert* was coining it in for Gottlieb, the same could not be said for the main players behind its creation. "I received a small bonus for my work on *Q*bert*, but I never got







The ColecoVision conversion is cited by Warren as being the most arcade faithful (scan from www.vintagecomputing.com).

THE HISTORY OF Q*BERT

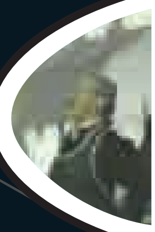
Faster Harder More Challenging Q*bert
"It was ready for release when the original *Q*bert* was enjoying its run and for some reason, the revamped version was shelved. I released the *Faster Harder More Challenging Q*bert* Rom images to them (MAME), so now the game is available to all," explains Warren.

Q*bert's Qubes
The official sequel to *Q*bert* programmed by Neil Burnstein, *Q*bert's Qubes* sees you having to rotate a cube so all colours of each side match the colours of the target cube. The player must get five cubes in a row to progress a stage further.

Q*bert 3
A standalone sequel released for the SNES, *Q*bert 3* is based on the arcade game set across 20 themed levels offering different playing fields to the classic pyramid setup we've become accustomed to. It even keeps the traditional control method of the arcade version.

Q*bert's Quest
Not a videogame, but this pinball machine does star the big-nosed curiosity so we're mentioning it here. It's most unique feature is that of the four flippers in an X formation. Like in the game, all fields in the pyramid have to be lit to score points.

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS



MAD PLANETS
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1983

PROTECTOR (VIDEOMAN)
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1984

US VS. THEM
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1984



any money from merchandising or home games. After *Mach 3* was released, the company started a royalty programme, which was not retroactive. If *Q*bert* had been produced under that royalty programme, I would have received royalties of around $100,000. Sadly, it wasn't and I didn't," explains Warren. "It got me a bonus and a substantial raise, which was only good for two years, when the company went out of business," remembers Jeff. "And I earned some money doing the graphics for the port (*Q*bert 3*), but that's it. It's mostly glory and the undying respect of my children!" Despite this, both Warren and Jeff have fond memories of the orange noser. "There are so many memories I have from that time, I couldn't describe them all, but one that stands out is watching the first *Q*bert* cabinets rolling off the assembly line. Another is watching people play *Q*bert* for the first time when we were testing in arcades," explains Warren. Jeff recalls the creative process the most fondly. "My strongest memory is drawing out the characters in pixel form on graph paper and colouring them with colour pencils. This may be because it is a tangible artefact of the working process, which I still possess."

By 1984, the market had reached its peak. Although *Q*bert* was a terrific success followed by several sequels (see 'The History of Q*bert' boxout) few of the arcade games that followed caught the public's imagination in quite the same way. Coca-Cola pulled the plug on the videogame division while the pinball aspect of Gottlieb was sold to VP and European investors, which operated until recently as Premier Electronics. Jeff carried on working in the field of videogames as a freelancer while Warren divides his time between programming and an acting career.

Even now, the hold of *Q*bert* remains and is something that still manages to amaze Warren. "There seem to be two reactions I get nowadays when people learn that I created *Q*bert*. One is, 'Oh my God! I really loved that game!' The other is a more humbling, 'What's *Q*bert*?' It really is amazing to me that anyone remembers this game at all after so many years, let alone fondly. While there are other accomplishments I made in the arcade industry of which I'm proud, *Q*bert* remains something of a phenomenon. I'm very, very grateful to have been allowed to helm its creation." When asked what he would change about *Q*bert*, Jeff wittily replies, "I would like to have changed the asterisk to something else, for two reasons – it's a wild-card search term, which caused problems, and because of the asterisk, *Q*bert* has not become a crossword puzzle standard, though it was in the *New York Times* in 2007."

And what would Q*bert have to say about his ongoing popularity? "I'm thinking he would say what the *Q*bert* arcade cabinet says when it is powered on… 'Hello, I'm turned on'." remarks Warren. Jeff sums it up for us perfectly with his Q*bert-like response: "I'M POPULAR? THEN GET ME OFF THIS @*&%$! PYRAMID ALREADY!"

THE CLASSIC GAME



Appearing late in the Amiga's commercial life and criminally overlooked by gamers jumping ship to the console bandwagon, *Ruff 'N' Tumble* was a frenetic and well-crafted platform shooter by talented dev outfit Wunderkind.

Looking past the unfamiliar name, a look at the design credits revealed an impressive pedigree. Programmer Jason Perkins created Gremlin's *Thing On A Spring*, and converted *Monty On The Run* to the C64, while graphic artist Robin Levy was responsible for the striking appearance of *Armalyte* and *Putty*. These guys knew their stuff, and wanted to create a quality experience. With superb art design and animation, a pumping soundtrack, and some vast scrolling levels, Ruff Rogers' bullet-fuelled caper is a belter. Mike Bevan argues the case for *Ruff 'N' Tumble* as candidate for greatest Amiga platform shoot-'em-up of all time. He loves a bit of *Ruff*.



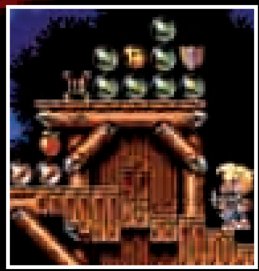
Ruff Rogers

With his bouncing quiff and a nimble turn of speed, pint-sized tearaway Ruff creates the merry havoc we'd expect from a small kid equipped with an enormous Uzi.



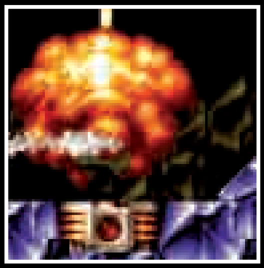
Nasty Robots

After stealing Ruff's marble collection and scattering them across four enormous worlds, the Tinhead army spend their remaining time trying to shoot him in the head.



Marble Madness

Each stage has an lots of red, green and blue marbles. Fulfilling the necessary quota of each colour allows progress to the next level.



Big Explosions

Gunfire hitting robots causes satisfying metallic clangs, and results in these mammoth pyrotechnics. Any game with explosions as nice as this has got to be good…

MEMORABLE MOMENTS

WHY IS IT A CLASSIC?



Ruff 'N Ready

Ruff 'N' Tumble is, put simply, a rollicking good action game. It's fast and smooth, extremely slick, and impossibly pretty (especially considering it's a non-AGA title.) Ruff, as a character, oozes personality – look at the attention paid to animating his quiff, and the agonised expression on his face when he bites the dust. Locating your lost marbles, while dispatching Tinheads and racing for weapon power-ups is highly rewarding and enormous fun. Ruff has big guns, an army of rampaging robots, and large plentiful explosions. What more could anyone possibly want from a platform run-'n'-gun game?

BEST BADDIE



The Tinheads

With an impressive array of robotic miscreants packed into its four vast 'worlds', poor Ruff has an epic struggle on his hands if he wants to reclaim his beloved marbles. Mechanised wasps, bats, and piranhas are some of the many hazards faced, but it's the bipedal Tinheads that make the biggest impression. Witness the gas-mask-faced, blunderbuss-carrying soldiers and the scarily tenacious American-football-player types. These come charging at you full pelt, effortlessly shrugging bullets from their metallic shells. If you meet one, just pray your weapon power doesn't run out before its armour plating does…

BEST BOSS



Mechanical Owl

Okay, so there are only four bosses in the entire game (encountered after exiting each world) so this aspect of *Ruff* isn't its strong point. But what's here is good, and we've a bit of a soft spot for this cute mechanical owl from the finale of the Forest world. His swooping gait and homing laser attack might flummox you for a few goes but he's not too hard to dispatch. Just grab a decent weapon as you exit the last of the Forest levels and position yourself at the bottom-left-hand corner of the screen so you can leap over his aimed blasts. Thing is, he's almost too nicely designed to blow into tiny pieces.

BEST WEAPON



Rocket Launcher

It has to be this grin-inducing long-range rocket launcher, found in the Cave world. It showers missiles across the screen, leaving multiple smoke trails, and destroying most enemies in one shot. Ruff can shoot in several directions, including upwards and at 45-degree angles, by holding down fire and aiming with the joystick, so you can dispatch foes on platforms above or below you. On picking up a special weapon, keep it powered up by collecting 'P' icons or it'll quickly run out of steam and you'll default to your short-range machine gun, which takes far more blasts to take down the bad guys.

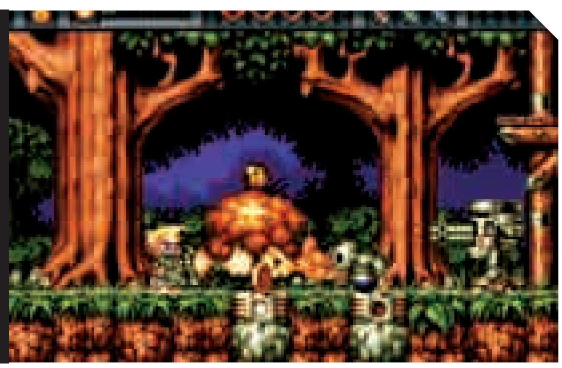
BEST STAGE



Cave world

Much as we love the Fantasy Forest stages, which serve as a gently intimidating introduction to all things *Ruff*, we have to applaud the fiendishly clever design of the Cave world. Secret passages to bonus-filled caverns, underwater bits, lava pools, self-destructing extra lives, and long corridors to the exit filled with lethal spikes and rock crushers are some of the pleasures that await you here. And all while continuing the good fight against the Tinhead army's finest, now with pointy drill-bit attachments to spice up their death-dealing effectiveness. Also, it's impossible for Ruff to drown. Unlike a certain hedgehog.

STANDOUT MOMENT



Killing Spree

Destroyed enemies normally drop bonus gold coins, which can be collected for extra lives (one for every 100 coins). Occasionally you'll get the chance of grabbing a special weapon (like this flame-thrower) and blowing away multiple enemies in a row – usually at dense areas of 'robot generators'. Such killing sprees start a bonus multiplier, giving you better items with each kill. These include energy hearts, shields, smart bombs and even extra lives. Tearing through a previously impassable crowd of Tinheads in a hail of explosions and bonus pickups is one of *Ruff 'N' Tumble*'s many memorably brilliant moments.



What the mags said… ages ago

Amiga Power

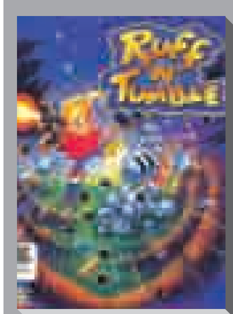
"A brilliant game put together by people who care about getting it right. You'll get angry, but all you'll be able to do is wag your finger at it and say, "You… Oh alright then my mistake…"

The One

"*Ruff 'N' Tumble* really is the apex of platform pleasure. In short, it's fab."

What we think

Ruff 'N' Tumble may be tough but it's also very fair. There are simple techniques for tackling each baddie and every situation – the satisfaction comes from figuring out how. It's been put together with meticulous care and attention to detail, and is enormous fun to boot. *Ruff* rocks.



IN THE KNOW

- **PLATFORM:** AMIGA 500/600/1200
- **DEVELOPER:** WUNDERKIND
- **PUBLISHER:** RENEGADE
- **RELEASED:** 1994
- **GENRE:** PLATFORM SHOOT-'EM-UP
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** A FEW QUID

ARCADE Inspection

NEO-GEO MVS



» SNK manufactured several styles of Neo-Geo cabinet – here's the larger arcade model and the more compact design for use in non-arcade venues.

FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS, SNK WENT ON TO STUN THE INDUSTRY IN THE EARLY NINETIES WITH THE MOST FLEXIBLE, COST-EFFECTIVE AND DOWNRIGHT POWERFUL PIECE OF KIT EVER TO HIT GAMING VENUES. MIKE BEVAN CELEBRATES THE SYSTEM THAT BECAME ONE OF THE MOST BELOVED AND LONG-RUNNING ARCADE PLATFORMS OF ALL TIME

The Future is Now' proclaimed the proud motto of Japanese developer SNK, as it unleashed its remarkable new hardware into an unsuspecting arcade market in April 1990. Inspired by the Latin term meaning 'New Frontier', the company's prescient design ethic endowed the Neo-Geo MVS (Multi Video System) with a remarkable production life span. Its 14-year 'official' run, the longest of any single arcade platform to date, would bear forth an abundance of well-loved coin-op franchises, including the *King Of Fighters* and *Fatal Fury* series, and the exceptional run-'n'-gun lunacy of *Metal Slug*. Ultimately, the Neo-Geo served to transform the previously little-known SNK into a globally recognised brand capable of competing with industry giants like Capcom and Konami, during a golden stretch that would run on through the remainder of the Nineties.

Prior to the release of the system, Osaka-based SNK had been a moderately successful company, with a couple of notable arcade hits. *Scramble*-forerunner *Vanguard* had enjoyed a financially fruitful licensing deal with Centuri for distribution in US arcades, and later Atari for its various home conversions, and the *Rambo*-inspired *Ikari Warriors*, with its unusual rotary control-system, had also proved popular with players. However, a number of solid titles including *Athena* (a 1986 scrolling platform game similar to *Wonder Boy*), which introduced the female character later reprised in SNK's *King Of Fighters*, and *ASO* (a *Star Force*-esque vertical-scrolling shooter with an innovative bolt-on weapon system) saw little in cash returns due to poor market distribution. Although SNK's founder and president, Eikichi Kawasaki, had already set up a US division (SNK Corporation of America), much of the company's product just wasn't being seen in those territories. With dedicated arcade PCBs costing around $1,000 in the US, arcade operators were understandably hesitant to take a chance on games they perceived as having niche appeal when compared to the 'safer' options of similar genre titles from more established coin-op brands. In the face of such stiff market competition Kawasaki shrewdly decided it would make business sense to appeal directly to the arcade operators themselves.

» *Crossed Swords* – a sort of medieval *Punch-Out!* with orcs…



Kawasaki's plan was simple but potentially revolutionary for the industry. Rather than release each game as a dedicated circuit board, he would introduce a modular cartridge-based system – one of the first occurrences in the coin-op market – where operators could buy the base motherboard with a number of different 'slot' specifications (one, two, four or six-slot, indicating the number of cartridge slots available in the unit). This allowed space-strapped arcade owners to run up to six game titles on the same Neo-Geo hardware kit and therefore a single cabinet. SNK was able to pass the reduced manufacturing outlay of producing a cartridge compared to a more complex PCB onto its customers, allowing for a sub $500 price point for most new Neo-Geo releases, nearly half of what most dedicated arcade titles cost at the time. The company even produced its own bespoke arcade cabinet with space for multiple 'mini marquees' to display up to six different Neo-Geo titles, and equipped with a button select which players could use to cycle through the various games slotted into the cabinet's innards. The relative ease and low cost of setting up a Neo-Geo cabinet running multiple games meant the system was also ideal for locations outside of amusement arcades, especially as it came pre-loaded with four free games during the generous post-launch promotion. Cabinets could soon be found in cinemas, pubs and video-rental stores offering customers a quick gaming fix – undoubtedly quite a coup for the good folks employed at SNK's marketing division.

As well as being designed to provide maximum flexibility for its operators, the Neo-Geo hardware was crafted for high-end, cutting-edge gaming and easily outstripped current 16-bit console technology – the SNES, Mega Drive and PC-Engine. When released, it outperformed the majority of competing arcade platforms, notably Capcom's CPS-1 – the hardware that would soon be running *Street Fighter II*. Although Neo-Geo was marketed as a '24-bit' system, at its heart was a dual processor setup integrating a 16-bit Motorola 68000 CPU alongside an 8-bit Z80 co-processor. The platform's powerful 2D architecture allowed 380 large multi-coloured sprites on screen at once – a massive number in those days, and an advanced palette of 4,096 colours at any one time. The on-board Yamaha sound chip provided 15 channel sound, and multi-channel digital speech-synthesis. What made the system really shine, however, was the enormous potential





» The generous launch offer gave operators the chance to stock up their newly purchased Neo-Geo cabinets with four free game titles.



"THE NEO-GEO TRANSFORMED THE LITTLE-KNOWN SNK INTO A GLOBALLY RECOGNISED BRAND CAPABLE OF COMPETING WITH CAPCOM AND KONAMI"

NEO-GEO MVS ARCADE SYSTEM HARDWARE SPECIFICATIONS

BOARD TYPE: JAMMA

MAIN CPU: MC68000 @ 12MHZ

SOUND CPU: ZILOG Z80 @ 4MHZ

SOUND CHIPS: YM2610 @ 8MHZ

VIDEO RESOLUTION: 320X224

COLOUR PALETTE: 4,096

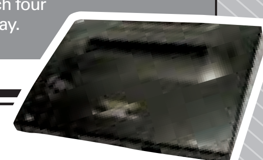
HARDWARE SPRITES: 380

DEBUT GAME: NAM-1975 (1990)

FINAL RELEASE: SAMURAI SHODOWN V SPECIAL (2004)

NEO-GEO AES HOME ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

The home AES was effectively a modified one-slot MVS motherboard with a console shell. The attractively packaged games were around half the cost of MVS carts, and had a unique cartridge pin-out to prevent them being used commercially by arcade operators. With a few exceptions, nearly all MVS releases were released for the AES, although in lesser numbers, leading to the current high value and collectability of titles such as *Metal Slug* and *Neo Turf Masters*, both of which reach four figure sums on eBay.



THE ART OF FIGHTING



Today, SNK's fighting game franchises are somewhat synonymous with the brand itself, so it takes some imagination to realise what an achievement it was to successfully take on Capcom's *Street Fighter II* in the early Nineties. Rivals like Konami and Taito both underestimated the requirements that would satisfy beat-'em-up fans, but SNK's grittily stylised characters, such as *Fatal Fury*'s Terry Bogard, had a different kind of appeal compared to the clean-cut Ryu or Chun-Li from *SFII*. SNK's games, particularly as each series progressed, built and improved on previous instalments; some standout moments in SNK's fighting game history being *King Of Fighters '98*, *Garou: Mark Of The Wolves* and *The Last Blade*. The ultimate honour for the company came in 2000, when old rival Capcom paid tribute to its fighting game legacy with *Capcom Vs. SNK*. Under the tutelage of SNK Playmore its flagship fighters continue to be produced for third party console and coin-op hardware.



FATAL FURY (1991-1999)

The first Neo-Geo versus-fighting game series introduced such characters as Terry Bogard and Joe Higashi and had several innovations over *Street Fighter II*, making use of its hardware to 'sprite-zoom' characters between two separate fighting planes. Confusingly subtitled *The King Of Fighters*, a phrase which SNK liked enough to give its own fighting game franchise, the original spawned two direct sequels, a number of spin-offs based on the third game (the *Real Bout Fatal Fury* sub-franchise) and the series' crowning glory, *Garou: Mark Of The Wolves*, which hit arcades in 1999.

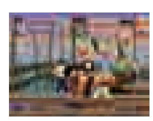


ART OF FIGHTING (1992-1996)

Showcasing some of the largest characters ever seen in a fighting game, this series' debut introduced the trademark Neo-Geo background-zooming effect (when characters moved apart) and was the first '100 Mega Shock' title (over 100 Megs). Set in the same fictional universe as *Fatal Fury*, the *AOF* titles featured some inventive ideas, principally a second energy bar or 'spirit gauge' that governed the use and power of special attacks, and could be depleted by 'taunting' your opponent. The second of the three *AOF* games is renowned for its tough-to-beat computer AI.

SAMURAI SHODOWN (1993 TO PRESENT)

With a focus on precision timing and counter-defence rather than rapid combo chaining of *Street Fighter II*, SNK's weapon-based beat-'em-up franchise never achieved the popularity of the company's more traditional combat games, but its hardcore leanings, unique atmosphere and stylised blood-letting would result in a cult following. The graphically superior second instalment is seen as a huge improvement over the first, offering revised, much deeper gameplay, and the third title introduced the now familiar 'Bust' and 'Slash' techniques, the former offering an alternative 'dark' mode for each character.



THE KING OF FIGHTERS (1994 TO PRESENT)

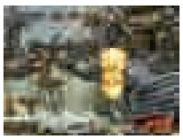
SNK's most prolific and profitable franchise started life as an intriguing crossover concept. Its debut, *The King of Fighters '94*, squared existing SNK fighting characters, along with combatants based on previous games like *Psycho Soldier* and *Ikari Warriors*, against each other in three-character team battles. Teams were tied to various countries and unchangeable. Later episodes featured huge character rosters and allowed for countless customisable team combinations.

THE LAST BLADE (1997-1998)

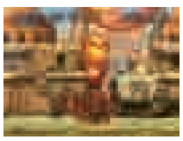
Effectively a technical refinement of the *Samurai Shodown* franchise, the two (MVS) games in this short-lived series represent the pinnacle of SNK's endeavours in the fighting field in visual presentation and art direction. Set in late 17th Century Japan, both games feature large characters with some of the most natural and fluid animation of any title on the hardware, and vibrant detail-packed backgrounds. Yet the fighting engine here is highly adept, the standout feature being the realistic feel of the 'repel' system, which deflects enemy attacks and rewards skilful players with spectacular counter-blows.

HOORAY! TANKIE TANKIE!

Metal Slug was a welcome return to the coin-op run-'n'-gun platform genre made famous by *Contra*, but which had fallen out of favour in arcades. Developer Nazca's staff roll included members who had worked on a number of Irem titles, such as *In The Hunt* and *Gunforce 2*. Taking a cue from these previous titles, *Metal Slug*'s irreverent mix of cartoon-style slapstick and high-caliber destruction struck a chord with players, as did its loveable armoured vehicle, the Metal Slug-001. The Neo-Geo hardware was privy to six outings of everyone's favourite chubby tank before SNK moved the franchise to Sammy's Atomiswave arcade hardware, followed by the most recent instalment, *Metal Slug 7*, currently released in Japan for Nintendo's DS.



METAL SLUG (1996)
Unlike certain SNK franchises which evolved more progressively, everything that made *Metal Slug* such a distinctive series is present in its debut. Pistol-packing protagonists Marco and Tarma, hopeless comedy soldiers, hairy POWs, huge detailed multi-part bosses, shotguns, rocket launchers and heavy machine guns – they're all here. The five in-game missions to bring down a rather inept guerilla uprising led by the war-mongering General Morden, are imaginative and varied, and there's nothing in gaming to quite compare with squashing a Fiat 500 with a fat tank.



METAL SLUG 2 (1998)
For the sequel, Nazca expanded the *Metal Slug* universe with a globe-trotting romp that visits a range of brand new locales, from Middle Eastern deserts and spooky Egyptian pyramids to the streets of Hong Kong. This episode introduced female soldiers Fio and Eri, and several new vehicles, including the mechanised Slug-noid and the Harrier-like Slug Flier. It's a great follow-up, despite going a bit *Independence Day* at the end with the realisation that General Morden might not be the true villain of the piece this time around.



METAL SLUG X (1999)
Essentially a 'Director's Cut' of *Metal Slug 2*, this is for all intents and purposes the same game, but nearly all the slowdown of the first release has been fixed, certain stages are now night missions or at different times of day, with background graphics altered accordingly and, most enjoyably, there's loads of humorously destructive new weapons to play with. The most useful are the 'Enemy Chaser' homing missiles, which make short work of the tenacious enemy choppers, but others, such as the 'Iron Lizard' – a remote-controlled car with a bomb strapped on top – are great fun.



METAL SLUG 3 (2000)
The ambitious third outing starts well enough, with multiple route branching, and the all-new underwater levels. Unfortunately, there's an over-reliance on biological enemies, and for the first time in the series boss fights have a drawn-out and tedious quality. The difficulty of later levels and length of the game, with clumsy vehicle-based shoot-'em-up interludes padding out the action, betray its coin-grabbing mentality. And zombies belong in *Metal Slug* about as much as flying saucers in *Indiana Jones*… Best feature? – the *Thunderbird 4* homage of the 'Slug Mariner'.



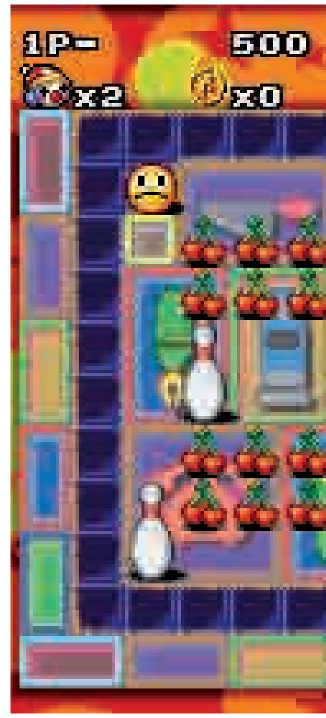
METAL SLUG 4 (2002)
This was the first *Metal Slug* that Nazca/SNK had no direct involvement in, due to the company's financial troubles. Korean publisher Mega Enterprise produced this somewhat by-the-numbers sequel, which retreads and recycles levels, characters and baddies from the three previous games to less than stellar effect. Seen as the weakest entry in the franchise, it's slightly less infuriating, and thankfully shorter, than its direct predecessor. Plus there's some cool stuff, like the opening motorbike chase, the new 'twin' heavy machine gun and a couple of new driveable vehicles.



METAL SLUG 5 (2003)
Mega Enterprises's second effort is a big improvement on *Metal Slug 4*, and gets bonus points for bothering to introduce a substantial number of new elements and levels to the mix. Taking in South American jungles and temples, then moving into more familiar military settings, there are two new usable vehicles, including the huge Spider Slug, and a useful ability to slide-attack enemies. It's the fairest game in the series for a long while, resisting the temptation to overwhelm the screen with nasties every ten seconds and with mostly even-handed boss encounters.









» Psikyo's splendid *Strikers 1945 Plus* is generally considered the finest vertical-scrolling shoot-'em-up on the system.

memory capacity of each cartridge. More than any other facet of the hardware, this would help to bring SNK's arcade catalogue to the attention of hardcore coin-op fans who would revel in the company's technical excellence in graphics, sound and animation.

The MVS system was launched in the West with four titles, *NAM-1975*, *Baseball Stars*, *Magician Lord*, and *Top Player's Golf*. *NAM-1975*, a *Cabal*-style third-person shooter with a slightly dubious Vietnam War setting, and *Magician Lord*, a scrolling platform-shooter adventure with play elements borrowed from arcade fare like *Ghosts 'N Goblins* and *Altered Beast*, weighed in at a hefty 46 Megabits or 'Megs' each, many times the memory capacity of the average 8 or 16-Mbit SNES or Mega Drive cartridge. At 60 Megs, *Top Player's Golf* had even more cartridge ROM, allowing its programmers to cram in the large on-screen character graphics and variety of courses, which zoomed in impressively from an overhead perspective as players progressed down the fairway. From the next batch of releases onwards, Neo-Geo titles would display the famous start-up banner 'MAX 330 MEGA - PRO GEAR SPEC', alluding to the 330 Mbit capacity of the system's cartridge format. This self-imposed ROM size limit was later exceeded for a number of second and third-generation titles, using clever bank-switching memory technology, up to the remarkable 716 Mbit utilised by *King Of Fighters 2003*.

With customary flair Kawaksaki's company introduced another unique concept for the platform. A small 2Kb RAM memory card, available separately, could be used to save progress in a number of Neo-Geo arcade titles, allowing players to return to any venue operating their game of choice and continue at a later date. This was particularly useful in timer-limited sports games, such as *Baseball Stars*. Further releases after the system's launch included psuedo-3D beat-'em-up *The Super Spy*, robot-themed *Contra*-clone *Cyber-Lip*, the entertaining *League Bowling*, and motorbike racing-sim *Riding Hero*. Overall, early customer feedback on the Neo-Geo MVS arcade system and its games was positive, and towards the end of 1990, SNK decided to make a home version available, for the first time marrying an arcade system with a direct home console hardware equivalent. The new home-purchase system was based on a design originally produced for rental use in luxury hotel chains. However, at $649 for the unit bundle, with one game title and a memory card, and around $200 a pop for each extra game, the Neo-Geo AES (Advanced Entertainment System) was beyond the reach of all but the most dedicated (and flush) of gamers.

Arcade manufacturers had been starting to enjoy a period of renaissance during the late-Eighties and early Nineties, following the mid-Eighties videogames crash. The release of *Street Fighter II* in March 1991





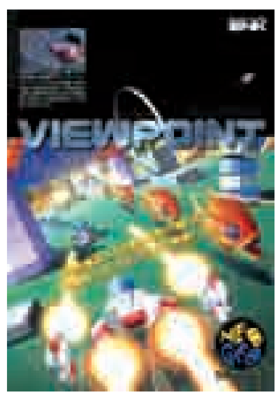
SNK GALS: ATHENA ASAMIYA

One of SNK's longest-serving characters, Athena made her debut in the eponymous 1986 arcade game, as a deformed princess fighting devilish creatures in a red bikini. Imagine's C64 conversion made her a poster-child for the 8-bit generation, and she would re-appear in the 1987 SNK game *Psycho Soldier* as the game's second playable character. A more contemporary version of Athena would crop up in *The King Of Fighters '94*, where she fought for China alongside Sie Kensou and Chin Gentsai, in rather less revealing attire. She's famous for changing her wardrobe and hairstyle with every incarnation of the *King Of Fighters* series, and can be seen in her red bikini again in 2003's *SNK Vs. Capcom*.



marked something of a revolution for the industry. By updating the somewhat stagnant fighting genre with brash, colourful graphics, memorable characters and great playability – simple to pick up but difficult to master – *Street Fighter II* was the first arcade mega-smash of the decade. SNK's counter-punch was *Fatal Fury* (*Garou Densetsu* or 'Legend Of The Hungry Wolf' in Japan), released in November 1991, which mirrored the large detailed character graphics and backgrounds of Capcom's hit but added an all-new feature. In allowing its characters to move between two separate planes in the fighting arena by employing the Neo-Geo's built-in sprite scaling hardware, SNK produced something that Capcom's ageing CPS-1 technology was unable to replicate. On its release, *Fatal Fury* quickly leapt to second place in the arcade charts, just behind Capcom's all-conquering brawler. *Fatal Fury* marked the beginning of a decade-long rivalry with arcade-giant Capcom, both manufacturers attracting a significant and loyal fan base as they jostled for prominence with each new fighting release. SNK's subsequent combat games like *Art Of Fighting*, *Samurai Shodown* and *The King Of Fighters* also spawned a number of state-of-the-art spin-offs and sequels, particularly the latter franchise, which became SNK's biggest money-spinner with yearly updates awaited expectantly by fans. All the more surprising is the fact that while Capcom upgraded its hardware to more powerful 2D systems, SNK stuck resolutely with the MVS through this period for all of its 2D fighting franchises, taking advantage of the system's gradually increasing ROM capacity to pack in ever more complex game features, character animation and artistry.

In the meantime third-party software support was steadily growing for the system. *Magician Lord* developer Alpha Denshi (ADK) released scrolling beat-'em-up *Ninja Combat*, cute platformer *Blue's Journey*, and the debut title in its *World Heroes* fighting series. Data East's *WindJammers* offered the odd but enjoyable premise of two-on-two frisbee combat, Taito converted its popular *Puzzle Bobble* from its own arcade hardware, and Hudson's *Neo Bomberman* brought explosive multiplayer chaos to the system. Technos produced a versus fighting spin-off based on its *Double Dragon* scrolling beat-'em-up series, and Sunsoft offered *Galaxy Fight* and the surreal *Waku Waku 7*. As with SNK's own extensive range of fighting games, these integrated the system's sprite/background scaling technology in an attempt to stand out from similar product on other arcade platforms. Before long the Neo-Geo MVS hardware could boast an impressive catalogue of quality titles covering a breadth of gaming genres. Shoot-'em-up fans were well catered for with *Pulstar*, Aicom's visually stunning tribute to *R-Type*, Video Systems' duo of *Aero Fighters* titles, and Yumekobo's *Blazing Star*. Sammy's beautifully realised



» The brilliant *Viewpoint* – possibly the finest isometric shooter ever made.

NEO-GEO MVS

GAME HIGHLIGHTS CHRONOLOGY:

1990

NAM-1975
Baseball Stars Professional
Top Player's Golf
Magician Lord
Riding Hero
Ninja Combat
Cyber-Lip
The Super Spy

1991

Sengoku
King Of The Monsters
ASO II aka Alpha Mission II
Burning Fight
League Bowling
Ghost Pilots
Crossed Swords
Raguy aka Blue's Journey
Eight Man
Robo Army
Thrash Rally
Fatal Fury aka Garou Densetsu

1992

Football Frenzy
Soccer Brawl
Mutation Nation
Last Resort
Ninja Commando
Baseball Stars 2
Andros Dunos
World Heroes
King Of The Monsters 2
Super Sidekicks
Art Of Fighting
Viewpoint
Fatal Fury 2

1993

Sengoku 2
Samurai Shodown aka Samurai Spirits
World Heroes 2
Fatal Fury Special
SpinMaster aka Miracle Adventure

1994

WindJammers aka Flying Power Disc
Art Of Fighting 2
Top Hunter
World Heroes 2 Jet
Gururin
Aggressors Of Dark Kombat
Sonic Wings 2
Fighter's History Dynamite aka Karnov's Revenge
The King Of Fighters '94
Zed Blade aka Operation Ragnarok
Super Sidekicks 2
Power Spikes II
Street Hoop
Samurai Shodown II
Puzzle Bobble

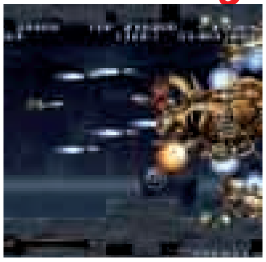
1995

Galaxy Fight
Double Dragon
Fatal Fury 3
Pulstar
Super Sidekicks 3
Kabuki Clash: Far East Of Eden
Savage Reign
World Heroes Perfect
Captain Tomaday
Panic Bomber
The King Of Fighters '95
Stakes Winner
Puzzle De Pon
Sonic Wings 3
Samurai Shodown III
Real Bout Fatal Fury

ARCADE Inspection

TEN of the best

PRICES ARE FOR LOOSE, USED EUROPEAN OR US MVS CARTRIDGES. JAPANESE CARTS CAN BE PICKED UP FOR LESS DUE TO THE LARGER NUMBERS AVAILABLE. ALSO, EXPECT TO PAY MORE FOR COMPLETE NEW OR COMPLETE MVS KITS...



LAST RESORT (1992) SNK's homage to Irem's classic horizontal-scrolling blasters remains one of the finest traditional shoot-'em-ups on Neo-Geo hardware. With accomplished visuals styled after the 'middle' *R-Type* games, it joyfully messes around with the Force pod concept with intriguing results. *Last Resort* implements a device that orbits your spindly ship according to its movements, can be fired off in any direction to take out enemy threats, bounced around the screen or, with the dab of a button, locked in place to protect any flank of your fighter you desire. The final level's giant battleship is particularly impressive.
Expect to pay: £50-75
Home conversions: AES



WAKU WAKU 7 (1996) For a second-generation Neo-Geo title Sunsoft's colourful versus beat-'em-up is a first-rate achievement. Each of the game's bizarre protagonists – from a bunny-eared nymphet to a walking police tank, and a young girl with a large, purple Totoro-like mascot – feature impressively fluid animation, and there's a pleasingly eclectic soundtrack. It plays well too, with smooth responsive controls and some suitably wacky and frequently hilarious special moves and combos to discover. If you're wondering what happened to games one to six, the title refers to the seven main playable characters in the story mode.
Expect to pay: £75-100
Home conversions: AES, Saturn



TWINKLE STAR SPRITES (1996) We had an in-depth look at this unique two-player 'versus' shooter back in issue 43, but couldn't resist re-asserting its greatness. A simple, but genius premise sees the screen split into two mini vertical shooters, then lets players zap enemies from their own scrolling window into their opponent's in an attempt to knock them out of the game. Each character has a different fighting (or shooting) style, and most enjoyably, a distinctive boss which can be sent across the screen to batter your rival. The current price of this MVS cartridge reflects its desirability and enduring appeal to Neo-Geo fans and collectors.
Expect to pay: £150+
Home conversions: AES, Saturn, DC



SHOCK TROOPERS (1997) An accomplished tribute to Capcom's *Commando* series (specifically the two-player sequel *Mercs*), this is a mightily enjoyable top-down run-'n'-gun romp, which actually betters its source of inspiration. Multiple characters and routes, groovier weaponry, and crisp visuals abundant with sprite-scaling wizardry will have you eagerly pumping the background scenery and its inhabitants with flying metal, and serve to take your mind off the rather ham-fisted 'rescue the kidnapped scientist and his grand-daughter' plot. A lengthier sequel, *Second Squad*, appeared in 1998, but this outing remains our favourite.
Expect to pay: £25-35
Home conversions: None



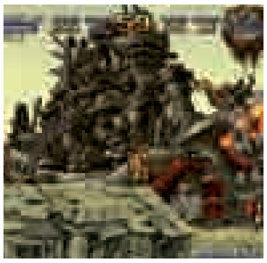
MAGICAL DROP 3 (1997) Data East's brainteaser is another fine two-player experience. Played out like an inverted *Columns*, the aim is to slow the inevitable *Invaders*-style descent of a wall of bubble-like spheres, by stacking three or more of the same colour to cause chain-detonations. The twist is that you pick your own ammunition, grabbing and firing spheres back into their desired locations, one colour at a time. The straightforward concept conceals some deceptively complex play strategies, with a dual-button control system that gives you twice as much to worry about as *Puzzle Bobble*...
Expect to pay: £40-50
Home conversions: AES, PSone, Saturn, GBC



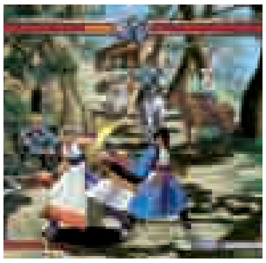
BLAZING STAR (1998) *Pulstar* is a stunning looking game, but it's so hard it actually makes us cry. This fast-paced sequel is far more enjoyable for non-superhuman gamers. A great pick-up-and-play manic blaster rather than an *R-Type*-inspired corridor lurker, it's arguably a more exciting game. With a generous choice of six pilot-able ships, *Blazing Star* inherits its forerunner's finger-punishing firing system where *Track & Field*-style pummelling spews forth extra on-screen weaponry and missiles. The only downside is the slightly irritating cry of 'BONUS!' every few seconds as you pick up the floating score panels.
Expect to pay: £30-40
Home conversions: AES



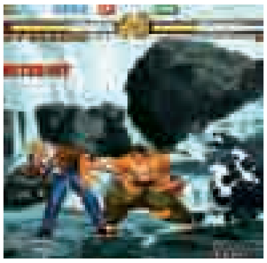
THE KING OF FIGHTERS '98 (1998) This fifth outing of this hugely popular franchise is subtitled *The Dream Match*, and the draw here is the enormous roster of characters. There are 38 main playable characters with a further 12 hidden fighters, and the scope for customising your perfect three-man/woman team is staggering. It uses the Extra/Advanced game modes introduced in *KOF '97*, with Advanced mode playing more like *Street Fighter II*, with a stronger emphasis on special attacks and 'Super Desperation Moves'. Despite its age, *KOF '98* is still considered the finest in the lineage by many.
Expect to pay: £20-30
Home conversions: AES, PSone, Dreamcast



METAL SLUG X (1999) If we were asked to recommend just one *Metal Slug* to someone who'd never seen the series we'd hand them the original. There's something about its no-nonsense, streamlined simplicity that timelessly appeals, compared to the excessive bloat of later sequels. Our 'Desert Island Slug' would, however, be this remixed version of *Metal Slug 2*, which managed to add just enough to the nigh-on perfect formula of the debut (Camel Slugs, walker Slug-noids, bouncing bullets, chaser missiles, and even bigger bosses) without destroying the enjoyment of the first game or ever outstaying its welcome.
Expect to pay: £50-75
Home conversions: AES, PSone



THE LAST BLADE 2 (1999) A sublimely beautiful weapon-based fighting game with a number of highly refined, thought-provoking game mechanics which make it a connoisseur's choice among Neo-Geo brawlers. The innovative parry and reversal system, deployed by pressing the 'repel' button at the moment an enemy strikes, gives it a realistic feel, and can produce some epic battles of wits against similarly skilled human opponents. Both games are brilliant, but we've opted to feature the sequel, with its increased roster, tighter presentation, and some marvellously naturalistic background scenes.
Expect to pay: £50-75
Home conversions: AES, Dreamcast, PS2



GAROU: MARK OF THE WOLVES (1999) Considered the ultimate SNK fighter by many, this final release in the *Fatal Fury* series appeared in arcades in parallel with *Street Fighter III*. In a similar manner, *Garou* is mostly populated by new characters, with Terry Bogard being the only returning competitor, and they all look great, with fluid animation and a huge roster of attacking and evasive moves and techniques, including the all-new 'feint' attacks and the 'Just Defend' blocking system. Hugely complex with incredible depth and a real sense of style, it's a fitting farewell to the systems' first ever fighting franchise.
Expect to pay: £50-75
Home conversions: AES, Dreamcast, PS2

HONOURABLE MENTIONS

The King Of Fighters '96 (more fisticuffs action from the premier franchsie), *The Last Blade* (a weapon-based fighter), *NAM-1975* (scrolling shooter in the style of *Cabal*), *Prehistoric Isle 2* (shoot-'em-up), *Neo Drift Out: New Technology* (cool isometric racer), *Neo Turf Masters* (excellent golf game), *Soccer Brawl* (brutal sports game), *WindJammers* (amazing take on *Pong*), Metal Slug (great run-'n'-gunner)









» *King Of The Monsters* crosses one-on-one fighting grudge matches with *Rampage*-style city destruction.

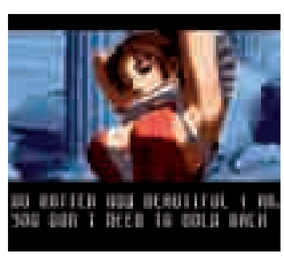
isometric shooter *Viewpoint* was a great fit for SNK's powerful 2D hardware, and ADK's cute 'versus' shooter *Twinkle Star Sprites* offered an unusual and unique twist on the genre. SNK's own shooter releases were of an equally high standard, particularly *ASO/Alpha Mission II* and the excellent *Last Resort*.

One of SNK's most loved franchises appeared in 1996, when *Metal Slug: Super Vehicle-001* arrived in arcades. A humorous spin on the platform run-'n'-gun genre, stuffed with intricate hand-drawn visuals and tank-based mayhem, the series' debut so impressed Kawasaki that he purchased the game's independent developer Nazca. This act of foresight brought what would become one of the most distinctive brands in SNK's portfolio under Kawasaki's direct control, and paved the way for five increasingly lengthy coin-munching sequels on the Neo-Geo hardware, along with the profitable licensing rights to a number of future console conversions and spin-offs. As the popularity of the company's expensive home AES system faded following the release of the PlayStation and Sega Saturn, the latter two consoles began to play host to ports of acclaimed titles like *Metal Slug*, *The King of Fighters '98* and *Metal Slug X*, broadening the potential audience and market for the company's products. Towards the end of the MVS's commercial life, Sega's Dreamcast would become the home platform of choice for conversions of superb third-gen titles like *Last Blade 2* and *Garou: Mark Of The Wolves*.

By 1997 SNK had more Neo-Geo MVS units in operation worldwide than any of its rival's arcade hardware, and was rapidly approaching its millionth sale – an incredible achievement for a venue-based videogame system. After dabbling in 3D arcade hardware with 1998's Hyper 64 system, for which only seven titles were released, SNK continued support for its MVS system for a further half decade. Yearly updates to *King Of Fighters* alongside several critically praised fighting sequels, and third-party developed games such as *Strikers 1945 Plus*, extended the system's shelf life into the new millennium. When the ROM encryption copy protection of the system's later releases was defeated, the widespread piracy of top-selling MVS cartridges in Asian territories, which SNK (prior to its rebirth as SNK Playmore) allegedly blamed in part for its bankruptcy, marked the beginning of the end for the platform commercially. Its final two releases, *The King Of Fighters 2003* and *Samurai Shodown V Special*, came in March and October 2004 respectively. However, the MVS hardware's durability and incredibly diverse high-quality back catalogue sees it continuing to be operated in arcade establishments around the globe nearly two decades on, and with a legacy of fans who remain deeply grateful for Kawasaki's boldly ambitious arcade venture.

SNK GALS: MAI SHIRANUI

Probably SNK's most popular and iconic character (we can't think why), Mai first popped out – erm, we mean up in *Fatal Fury 2*, and was SNK's first ever playable female fighter. Happily, Mai's definitely well equipped for up-front combat, with a large fan that's particularly useful for poking at her opponents. She was seen in SNK's *The King Of Fighters '94* in a team with King and Yuri from *Art Of Fighting*, and has since featured in every Neo-Geo *King Of Fighters* release, as well as having cameos in character endings for *Samurai Shodown* and *Art Of Fighting 2*. Poor Mai fell foul of US videogame censors when her appearances in *Fatal Fury 2*, *Fatal Fury Special* and *King Of Fighters 2002* had their infamous jiggle-some animation removed for North American arcade audiences. Presumably they just don't like ti… (That's enough – Ed)



» Mai's victory cut-scene in *SNK Vs. Capcom*.

NEO-GEO MVS (CONT)

GAME HIGHLIGHTS CHRONOLOGY:

1996
Neo Turf Masters aka Big Tournament Golf
Tecmo World Soccer
Magical Drop 2
Metal Slug: Super Vehicle-001
Super Dodgeball
Over Top
Neo Drift-Out
Operation Ragnagard
Ninja Masters
Art Of Fighting 3
Puzzle De Pon! R
The King Of Fighters '96
Kizuna Encounter
Stakes Winner 2
Twinkle Star Sprites
Waku Waku 7
Breakers
Samurai Shodown IV

1997
Money Idol Exchanger
Real Bout Special
Magical Drop 3
Neo Bomberman
Neo Mr. Do!
The Irritating Maze
The King Of Fighters '97
Shock Troopers
The Last Blade

1998
Blazing Star
Metal Slug 2
Real Bout 2
Breakers Revenge
The King Of Fighters '98
Shock Troopers: 2nd Squad
Battle Flip Shot

1999
Metal Slug X
Puzzle Bobble 2
The King Of Fighters '99
The Last Blade 2
Prehistoric Isle 2
Ganryu
Garou: Mark Of The Wolves
Strikers 1945 Plus

2000
Metal Slug 3
Nightmare In The Dark
The King Of Fighters 2000

2001
Sengoku 3 aka Sengoku Legends
The King Of Fighters 2001

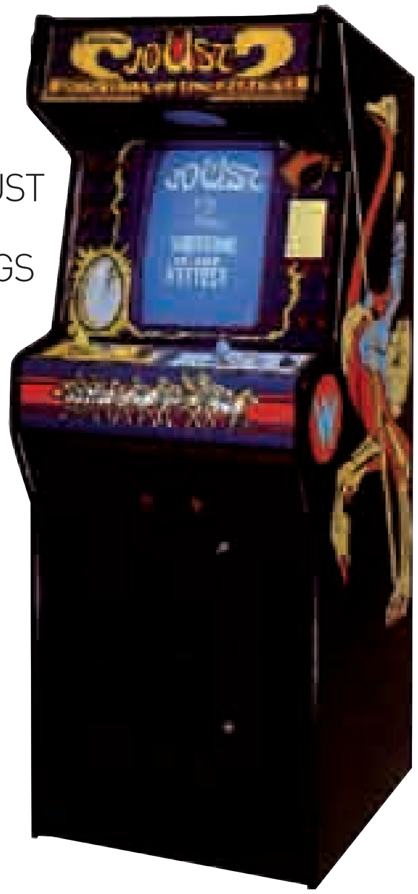
2002
Metal Slug 4
The King Of Fighters 2002
Rage Of The Dragons

2003
Samurai Shodown V aka Zero
Matrimalee
The King Of Fighters 2003
Metal Slug 5
SVC Chaos: SNK Vs Capcom
Samurai Shodown V Special

HIGH SCORE

JOUST 2

SUBTITLED 'SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST', JOUST 2 SHOWS NO MERCY. LET EXPERT ROBERT GRIFFIN BE THE WIND BENEATH YOUR WINGS



Given the enduring popularity of the original *Joust*, the obscurity of its sequel is rather perplexing. Perhaps it was due to the four-year gap between releases, or that in 1986, the arcade industry was definitely in the doldrums. The brutal difficulty of *Joust 2* probably didn't help either and its use of a vertical display may have discouraged home conversions too, resulting in this demanding but ultimately rewarding game to remain largely forgotten, until its appearance on the second of *Midway's Greatest Arcade Hits* collections in 1997.

Created by *Joust* coder John Newcomer, with help from Warren '*Q*bert*' Davis, the deviousness of your foes and the ability to morph your mount introduces a whole new level of strategy. The screen layouts are varied and frequently fiendish, with a graphical style that mixes futuristic metal structures with ancient columns, mystical knights and surreal chanting mouths. With a two-player mode that sadistically switches between co-operation and competition, this is one to rediscover.

THE EXPERT

Despite his phenomenal scores on some mightily demanding arcade classics, Robert Griffin is no Superman. He's Superman's dad.

"I wanted to give my son a name that was unique so I named him Kal-El, which is what Superman is called on Krypton," explains proud father Robert. "I wanted to give him a name that was strong, something to live up to, and it's such an awesome name."

Kal-El is eight years old now and accompanied his old man to this year's Funspot Tournament, held at the New Hampshire arcade where Griffin Sr set his marathon *Joust 2* record back in 2006. **Retro Gamer** was looking on during that eight-hour game and was duly touched when the father put his son's initials atop the high-score table next to the mammoth 13 million points tally and then phoned his boy for an emotional exchange. Our eyes were watering too at Robert's distinctive gaming stance: with his legs splayed painfully wide apart he reminded us of a human Mercedes Benz badge.

"I do it so I'm not hunching my neck and I want to make sure there's no pressure on my wrists," he explains. A sensible precaution when there's that much pressure on screen, we suggest. "Yeah, the difficulty of *Joust 2* is what I like and also what I hate. I can still get down to one man on the first screen. I have this masochistic tendency to play games that are really hard. I like the challenge."

And Robert has never shied away from a challenge. As a teenager he was fascinated with *Robotron* and the group of players that dominated the machine's high-score table at Tim's Fountain, his local arcade in Kirkland, Washington. He plucked up courage to ask one of them who lived close by for some friendly guidance, only to be rudely dismissed. "He looked at me like I was crazy and shut the door in my face. I was really embarrassed and upset. At that moment, I swore I'd beat his score."

Robert concentrated his efforts, doing artwork for the arcade in return for tokens to hone his skills and the moment he topped his nemesis's score was sweet indeed. "I was sitting in the arcade, eating ice cream, and saw him come up to the machine. He brought up the high-score table by bringing the sticks together and looked for a second. Then he did it again and just walked out. I never saw him there again, ever.'

Robert's mastery of *Robotron* saw his name appear in the *Guinness Book Of Records* back in the Eighties under his previous surname 'Bonney', and he's still setting records today. He recently bagged the *Lock 'N' Chase* title and he's aiming for the *Zookeeper* crown next. "Kal-El loves that game too," he smiles. "Some parents use games and TV to babysit their kids. The games we play, we play together."

We managed to grab a word with Griffin Jr, who can already wipe the floor with dad on *Halo 2*. "I can't beat him on *Joust 2*," acknowledged the lad. "Maybe when I'm older." This could be the start of a dynasty…

THE KNOWLEDGE

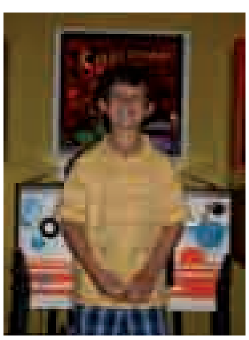
"In *Joust 2*, you now have the ability to switch between ostrich and pegasus. The pegasus is bigger and more powerful, though much harder to keep aloft; you basically have to flap twice as hard to keep his big butt in the air, which can be tiring at times. *Joust 2* is vertically oriented, making it much more difficult to out-flap or out-manoeuvre the enemies making aerial battles tougher.

"There are 40 waves, with 36 unique configurations. At wave 41, the wave configurations start all over again, but with different enemy layouts. You basically have to learn how to play 72 different screens! All of the original core enemies are now smarter and faster. In particular, the pterodactyl is much smarter than in the original *Joust*. Trying to run away from it is folly, as it will promptly follow you, similar to a baiter in *Defender* and *Stargate*. Your best hope is to kill it immediately, or shortly thereafter.

"The newly hatched warriors are threats if you are in ostrich form, as they now walk

HIGH SCORE NEWS

The tenth annual gathering of the world's best classic gamers at Funspot arcade in New Hampshire, USA, saw a staggering 48 new world records set, which is actually a record in itself for 'Most records during a single event'. Isaiah 'TriForce' Johnson bagged himself nine of those, including highs on *Black Tiger, Double Dragon 2* and *MERCS*, while Darren Harris got into the *Indy* spirit and scored over 1.5m on *Temple Of Doom*. Dutchman Aart Van Vliet's score of almost 800k on *Galaxian* was the highest ever achieved at a live event and was watched by current champ Gary 'Mighty' Whelan with a nervous smile. And it wouldn't be a Funspot tournament without Roy 'Mr Awesome' Shildt doing a little stalking. This time he phoned up random hotels near to the arcade, demanded to speak to 'a gamer' and then ranted at the unfortunate strangers who answered about how he was robbed of his *Missile Command* crown. Our sources tell us that since his memorable cameo in *The King Of Kong*, Roy's been approached by several documentary makers, though all have backed off after actually meeting him. Shame.



» Young Kal-El with a particularly appropriate pin…



» Kiss me deadly…



» Robert reckons this screen and The Altar are the hardest in the game.



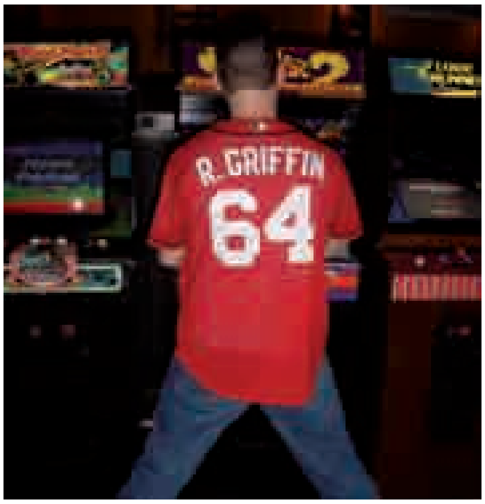
» Robert after setting his marathon *Joust 2* record in 2006.



» That's going to hurt.



» The Altar: many lives are sacrificed here.



» That distinctive Griffin stance. No slouching here, folks.

"I HAVE THIS MASOCHISTIC TENDENCY TO PLAY GAMES THAT ARE REALLY HARD. I LIKE THE CHALLENGE" ROBERT GRIFFIN. YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED

back and forth with lance protruding, looking to disembowel you. Since they cannot harm you in pegasus form, it is usually best to approach them as beast rather than bird. There are golden eggs which, when collected, trigger a timer. By stepping on this timer, which is limited in duration to about 13 seconds, you will receive a bonus of 1,000 to 10,000 points, a Super Zap, which kills everything on the screen, or an extra life.

"A maddening new addition to *Joust 2* is Lightning. If you touch it, you are toast, but enemies are immune to its touch. The lightning is not arbitrary; it is placed in very inconvenient locations and gets progressively more volatile. If an egg falls into the lava, it will spawn a mutant: a slightly bigger, smarter, and more aggressive version of a shadow lord. If a mutant egg falls in the lava, it will not spawn another mutant.

"Another new enemy is the lance-nosed crystal bats, who hatch from diamond-shaped eggs or gems imbedded in some ledges in the game. Although not the toughest enemy in the game, sometimes trying to kill the last one on the screen can be a bit frustrating.

"The worst of all the enemies is Deceptus, the mechanical buzzard. It plods along, just out of reach behind the other enemies. Once you are trapped by enemies or pinned in because of the screen layout, Deceptus will make his way towards you for the kill and there is virtually nothing you can do to stop him. Just when you are about to drop on him for the kill, he all of a sudden vanishes, and reappears wherever it is most inconvenient for you on the screen. The most maddening aspect of this is that many times if you are killed, he will stay phased out until you are just phasing in yourself… and then he will phase in on top of you, and there is no possible way for you to escape. It's enough to make you scream!"

THE FROGGER

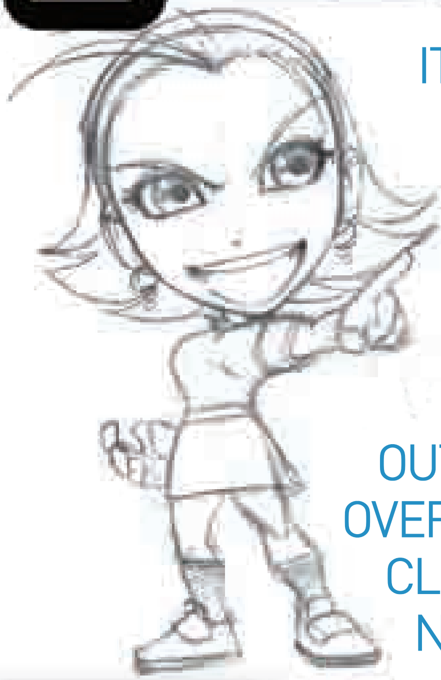
Among the many outstanding achievements at Funspot X, **RG** was especially impressed with Pat Laffaye's new *Frogger* record of 599,110. We featured former champ Mark Robichek back in issue 14, who's best of 442,330 had stood for 23 years, until maestro Donald Hayes hopped to a new high in 2005. Now Pat has leapfrogged them all. "I started playing *Frogger* in 1981," he tells us. "It was so popular, no matter which arcade I went to, I could usually count on a machine being there. And it didn't hurt that the girls liked playing it, too." His next goal is to break George Costanza's mythical record of 860,360, as seen in episode 174 of *Seinfeld* where George discovers his initials are still on the machine he played as a kid (ignoring the fact that *Frogger* didn't allow you to input a name nor did it save high scores). "I've already started loading up on the mozzarella pizza," burps Pat.



» GLC may not live forever…

THE MAKING OF...

New International TRACK & FIELD™





IT'S BEEN 25 LONG YEARS SINCE KONAMI FIRST UNLEASHED TRACK & FIELD IN ARCADES AROUND THE WORLD. **DARRAN JONES** TALKS TO SUMO DIGITAL'S PAT PHELAN AND FINDS OUT WHAT HURDLES HAD TO BE OVERCOME IN ORDER TO REALISE THE CLASSIC FRANCHISE FOR A BRAND NEW GENERATION OF GAMERS



IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI
- » **DEVELOPER:** SUMO DIGITAL
- » **RELEASED:** 2008
- » **PLATFORMS:** NINTENDO DS
- » **GENRE:** SPORTS
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £29.99

We've got a special love for Sumo Digital. It's not quite as strong as the love a parent has for a child, or that a partner has for their better half, but it's nevertheless an intense emotion and it's one we've had ever since we played a near-perfect port of Sega's *OutRun 2* on Microsoft's Xbox.

Since then Sumo's output has constantly interested us and we've always kept a beady eye on the Sheffield-based developer – mainly because it appears to be one of the few dev teams around who genuinely appear to love old-school games as much as us. If you need further proof then you only have to look at recent hits like *OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast*, *Virtua Tennis 3*, the underrated *Sega Superstars Tennis* and now *New International Track & Field*, quite simply the best sports game currently available on the DS.

"A lot of us at Sumo have worked together for ages, and we've been in the industry since the 8-bit days," begins Pat Phelan, *New International Track & Field*'s executive producer. "Because of this we all remember playing the retro classics as part of our childhood and early working life together, I think that creates a special fondness for the early titles that help shape our gaming experiences today. Don't get me wrong, we're not stuck on this romantic idea of a golden age of gaming, a lot of what we're doing is with brand new IP. We're basically gamers with masses of development experience – you just end up writing the stuff you want to play I guess."

Indeed you only have to play *Coast 2 Coast* and *Sega Superstars* to realise this. *Sega Superstars*, in particular, is definitely worth playing, if only so you can see the sheer amount of classic characters and games from Sega's huge back catalogue that Sumo was able to cram into it. So when Konami was looking for a team to revitalise one of its oldest franchises, Sumo must have seemed like the most obvious choice.

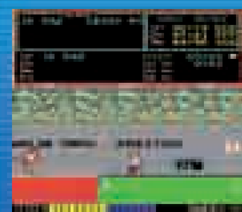
"Konami approached Sumo," recalls Phelan about how Sumo initially ended up with the project. "As soon as they heard we had a team available they drove up to the Sumo offices the same day to discuss the game. Konami had a very clear idea of what they wanted from the franchise in terms of aesthetics and from a multiplayer angle."

If you've not read our glowing review on page 93 yet then allow us to give you some further information about Sumo's new realisation of the 1984 classic. First of all, the number of events has increased from the original game's six to 24, there's a huge amount of unlockable content, including eight classic Konami characters, and the aforementioned online mode, which for the DS is quite frankly astonishing. Add in a selection of different gameplay modes including a classic re-enactment of the original arcade hit and it's little wonder that Phelan and the rest of his team ended up working on the project for a little over a year and a half.



» He may be best known for his sneaking abilities, but Solid Snake is actually a pretty good all-round athlete. Rumours that he slits the throat of whoever beats him are unfounded.

YOU CAN'T HAVE EVERYTHING...



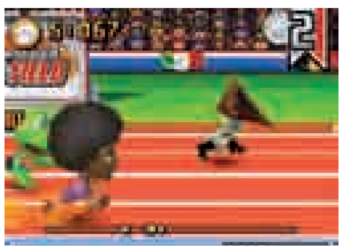
As much as we love *New International Track & Field*, we can't help but feel that the omission of the original 1984 arcade hit is something of a missed opportunity. While we can understand that it would have been something of an undertaking to hide the entire series within the tiny DS cart, we're nevertheless disappointed that the original hasn't been included, especially as it can already be found on Konami's DS arcade compilation.

"We did have it down on our original feature list and really wanted to include it," explains Phelan. "Sadly, we had to drop it for two reasons – space and time. Space on the cartridge was getting tight, and it would have taken more resources than we had to get the arcade versions working on the DS. All that said we have set up a special mode called Classic Track & Field that you can unlock and that plays exactly like the original arcade machine."



» It's great to see that Pentaro made the cut, although he's looking a lot tougher than we remember.







"We had a small but very talented core team of around 15 people working around the clock for around 18 months," he continues. "*New International Track & Field* was a bit more complex to produce than most other DS games; this was in part due to the online nature of the game. But also because we treated each event as a self-contained game – so you ended up doing 24 individual games instead of just one. It doesn't sound like much of an issue but when you think that most games reuse a lot of animations and controls across a varied selection of environments we were for the most part rewriting control systems for each individual event, creating unique animations for each character across all 24 events. It ends up having a slightly more complex pipeline than perhaps a lot of DS games normally would."

This is the second big retro franchise that Konami has handed out to a handheld team recently (see our making of *Contra 4* in issue 51), so we were quite interested to see if Sumo had the same happy experience that WayForward Technologies had benefited from.

"Oh absolutely," confirms Phelan. "The team had input into absolutely everything. Characters, events, online, rewards, unlocks. Konami originally came to us with a list of wishes and 'must have features'. We designed and fleshed everything out. It was the online that was the big requirement for Konami though. I remember being sat in a meeting with Konami discussing how we make *New International Track & Field* the standard for online games on the DS. It was a conscious decision to go this route right from the off, which is really important whenever you're developing a game; know what you're trying to achieve from the start, and go for it."

Sumo certainly went for it and the end result is arguably one of the DS's most polished games, especially in terms of its actual online structure, which in many ways mimics the superb effort that is Xbox Live. Nintendo has often been criticised for its seemingly reluctant attitude to the online gaming market – although the recently released *Mario Kart Wii* is a small step in the right direction – so it should come as no surprise to learn that it's a third party and not Nintendo itself who has harnessed the full online power of the DS.

"From the start Konami asked us to make a game that would set the standard for online with a DS," explains Phelan, when we asked him how Sumo raised the bar with its online infrastructure. "We looked long and hard at what other titles were offering and tried to build on this. I think our real 'eureka!' moment came when we were looking at two sets of network data side by side – one lot from Nintendo, the other from our website partners Agora. We started looking at the possibilities, we were taking data from one source and cross-referencing with the website data and bundling it all back onto the DS. We found that not only could we tell people when their mates were online – we could see who just broke their personal best at a particular event, analyse this on custom servers and then compare that against friends and rivals' personal bests, we could then generate appropriate messages that get sent to friends DS's.

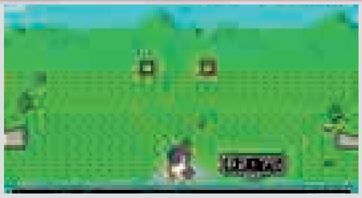


» There were only so many classic characters that Konami and Sumo could include, so Moustachio, the main character from *Track & Field*, never made the final cut.

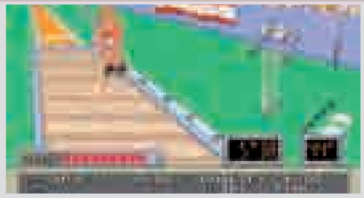
TRACK & FIELD TIMELINE



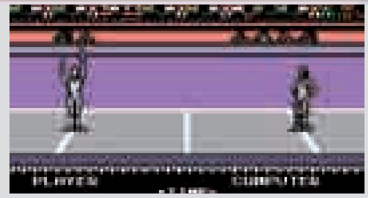
TRACK & FIELD
FIRST RELEASED: 1983
SYSTEM FEATURED: ARCADE
This is where it all began. Featuring just six events ranging from the javelin to the 100m sprint; players set records by hammering buttons (or a trackball on earlier models) for all they were worth, while a separate action button was used to set angles, throw hammers or jump hurdles.



HYPER SPORTS
FIRST RELEASED: 1984
SYSTEM FEATURED: ARCADE
This was an excellent sequel that featured skeet shooting, weightlifting, freestyle swimming, vaulting horse, triple jump, archery and pole vault. A nice touch is that many of the events – skeet shooting being a good example – have numerous secrets for boosting your overall score.



KONAMI '88
FIRST RELEASED: 1988
SYSTEM FEATURED: ARCADE
Now this is more like it. As well as greatly updating the sprites from the first two games, Konami included plenty of neat graphical tricks including scaling and overhead views to make the action more exciting. There was also a total of nine events including the crippling 400m relay.

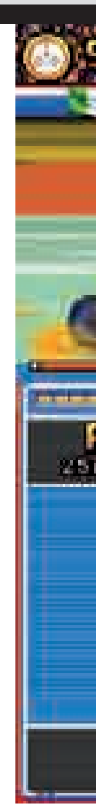


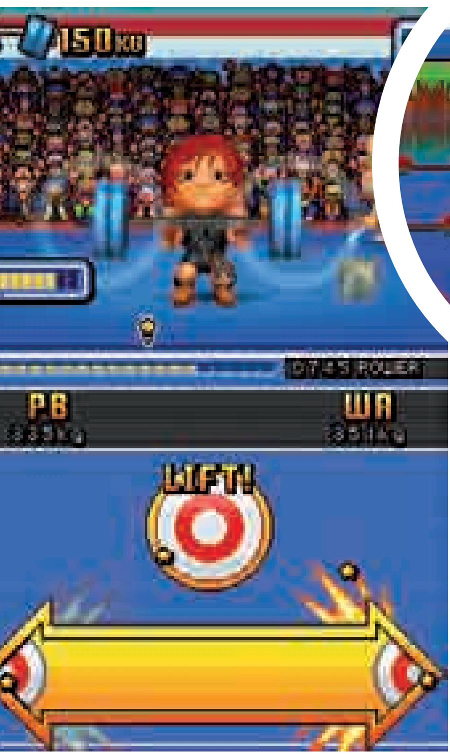
TRACK & FIELD II
FIRST RELEASED: 1988
SYSTEM FEATURED: NES
Only available on the NES, *Track & Field II* features big, well-animated sprites, great gameplay mechanics and numerous game modes. The events also show more variety with the 14 available competitions including taekwondo, hang gliding, clay pigeon shooting and arm wrestling.

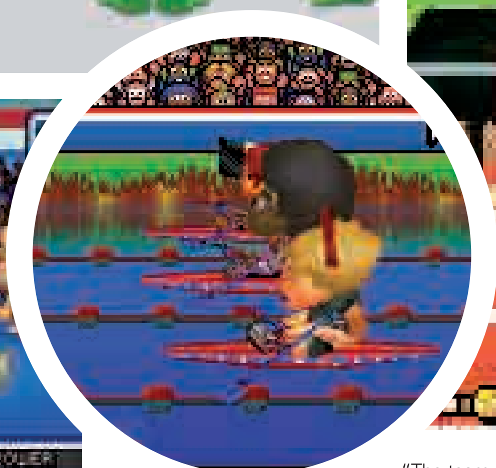


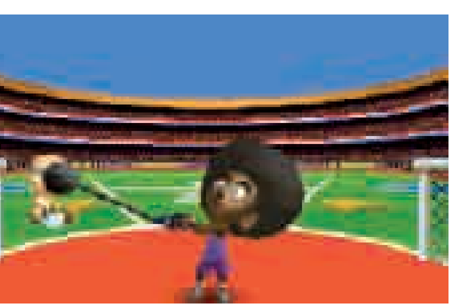
» Various illustrations of Frogger in his running suit. Note the pixel motif on the front.











"The team took this further by creating the ability to send preset messages to people on your friends list using the messaging system. The whole experience started to feel more like something you'd find on an Xbox than a DS. I really don't think this would have been possible if online were something that we'd just slapped in at the end. We'd had a good experience developing on the DS and we're really interested in pushing the envelope even further in the future."

If an online mode was so important to Konami, you have to wonder why Sumo decided to create *NIT&F* specifically for the DS. While we can see how its new stylus controls are perfectly suited to the system – you utilise the touchscreen in a variety of different ways – the original game required you to use three buttons, something every console currently has. Why not maximise the game's potential by releasing it on PSP, Xbox 360 and other platforms and the often stronger online infrastructures those systems have?

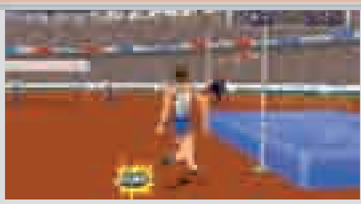
"To be honest the DS just seemed to be the perfect console for *New International Track & Field*," explains Phelan about Sumo's eventual decision. "The stylus lends itself beautifully to the frenetic nature of the game. *NIT&F* could have appeared on any other console, it just worked really well on the DS, so it was a question of ergonomics more than anything else."

Phelan certainly has a point. While you're initially wary of using it too roughly for fear of damaging the DS's screen you quickly realise that it's far easier to play *NIT&F* with the stylus than it is to hammer away at the machine's tiny A and B buttons (something we've found incredibly tough to do with our banana-sized hands).

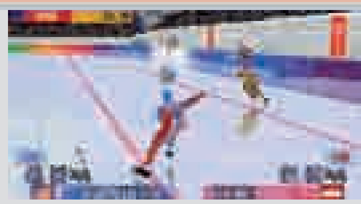
"It's always tough trying to predict what control layouts will work for the majority of people," begins Phelan when we press him about *NIT&F*'s total lack of customisable buttons (one of the game's few faults). "We just went with what we all liked to play with. During development we prototyped many different combinations of button controls. We found that configurations which used the D-pad or shoulder buttons were not as tactile as those that used the group of A, B, X or Y and as a result were significantly less competitive. We certainly did not want to risk frustrating players by offering button configurations, which unnecessarily handicapped them. Having decided to use a combination of the four right-hand buttons there seemed to be little advantage in making the controls configurable."

Of course, many will argue that the excellent stylus controls easily make up for the somewhat cumbersome button layouts, and after setting several gold medals we'd be inclined to agree with them.

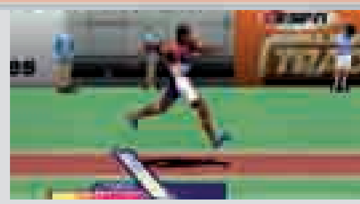
Of course, the biggest deal about Sumo's new game – at least as far as long-term Konami fans are concerned – are the many secret characters that have been included for completing specific tasks. In all there are eight to find with the total roster featuring Pentaro the Penguin, *Castlevania*'s Simon Belmont, Frogger, Solid Snake, Sparkster, *Rumble Roses*' Evil Rose and bizarrely, *Silent Hill 2*'s Pyramid Head. Perhaps more interesting though is Sumo and Konami's decision to feature a brand new starting line-up of characters (created by popular Asian comic artists, UDON) ranging from the hulking Helga who looks likes she wrestles bears for breakfast to the blue-eyed Dirk who appears to have been cut from the same cloth as *Street Fighter II*'s Ken Masters.



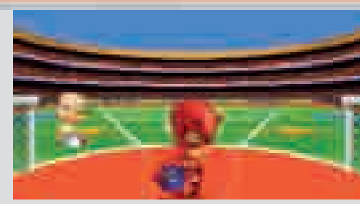
INTERNATIONAL TRACK & FIELD/ HYPER ATHLETE
FIRST RELEASED: 1996
SYSTEM FEATURED: ARCADE
Hyper Athlete and *IT&F* are essentially the same, with the former being an optimised version of the latter. Both are great additions to the series and feature three-button gameplay and improved visuals. We still prefer *Athlete Kings* though.



NAGANO WINTER OLYMPICS '98
FIRST RELEASED: 1998
SYSTEM FEATURED: ARCADE
Riding on the popularity of the Winter Olympics and following Sega's excellent *Winter Heat, Nagano* applies the basic formulae of old (with added joystick controls) to a new wintery setting. It's certainly a lot of fun in places, but it's easily the weakest link in the *Track & Field* chain.



INTERNATIONAL TRACK & FIELD 2000
FIRST RELEASED: 2000
SYSTEM FEATURED: PS2
Konami's entry on the last generation of consoles was an extremely good effort. Presentation was superb, with plenty of exciting camera angles, impressive mo-capped athletes and a polished multiplayer mode. It's a pity that it only has ten events.



NEW INTERNATIONAL TRACK & FIELD
FIRST RELEASED: 2008
SYSTEM FEATURED: DS
With a score of great unlockables, 24 events to master and an intricate online mode, this is easily the best version of Konami's classic franchise. Be wary though as it's rather difficult to play with buttons if you have sausage fingers like we do.



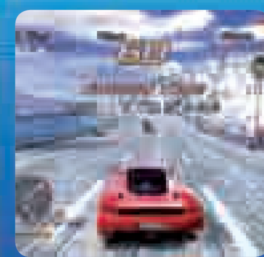


» The Sumo Handheld team take a quick break to pose for the camera.





» Various poses of Rocket Knight, as drawn by the talented artists at UDON.



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

OUTRUN 2 (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: XBOX
YEAR: 2004

RACE DRIVER 2006
SYSTEM: PSP
YEAR: 2006

GO! SUDOKU
SYSTEM: PS3, PSP
YEAR: 2006

"Our original plan was to have a line up of original characters that people could recognise as being part of *NIT&F*, a franchise in its own right," explains Phelan when we asked him why the Konami stalwarts weren't available from the off. "The Konami characters were always supposed to be a reward, a bonus for doing well. They worked incredibly well in terms of excitement levels within the community but I think we did the right thing – looking at the player data we have there's a healthy split between people playing the original characters and the actual Konami characters. The unlockable characters themselves were proposed by Konami. Sumo then helped to whittle the list down to a preferred line-up. There were a few big Konami characters that didn't make it into the final line-up and some original *NIT&F* characters that we also had to drop. My favourite being a character called Wiener – who was basically a bloke in a giant hot dog suit."

But where's the original runner from *Track & Field*? Many of you are no doubt wondering the same thing as us, so we put the question to Phelan. "He's there," confirms Phelan. "The Referee is Moustachio a few years on. So he did make it into the game – in fact there's a cheat to change the Referee skin into the younger Moustachio skin. You just put the classic Konami cheat code into the game on the 'VS' screen (you have to do this really quick though). This also used to trigger those robotic speech samples that announced your scores too, but we had to remove those because of limited space on the cart. After he got dropped as a full-blown character, we wanted to do a 2D version of him. A flat sprite-like character that could be unlocked with classic mode. After a couple of abortive attempts we decided that the amount of effort to get a 2D version of Moustachio animated for all events was prohibitive within the timescales we were working to."

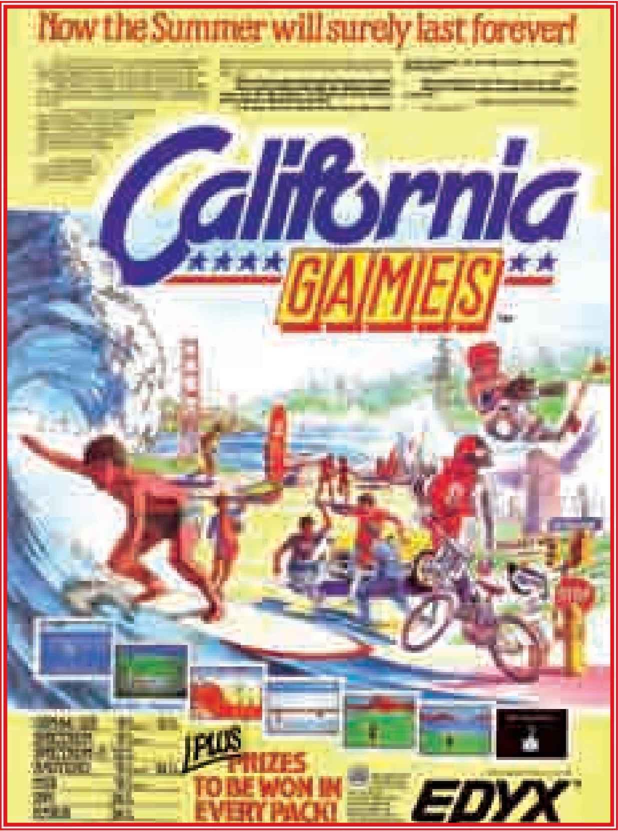
Although several elements and characters had to be dropped for the final game, Sumo at least ensured that there's still plenty to discover, whether it's the aforementioned characters, outlandish costumes or brand new events specific to certain Konami characters.

"Who doesn't love unlocks?" begins Phelan when we question him about what is fast becoming a Sumo tradition (no one does unlockables like the Sheffield-based developer). "My feeling is that rewarding people with in-game goodies fulfils a pretty fundamental work/reward ethic that is at the core of all of us – it just feels satisfying to get something for your effort. So why not reward people who are willing to explore past the first hurdle? I feel that in-game rewards and unlockables go towards making gamers feel cared about, the fact that the effort they make to play through a game is recognised and rewarded. As *NIT&F* is online, it enabled us to take rewards into 'bragging rights' territory. You play, you do well; you get a costume that no one else has unlocked yet. Players respect that, and want to aspire to achieve the same. I think this in turn helps to feed the competition online."

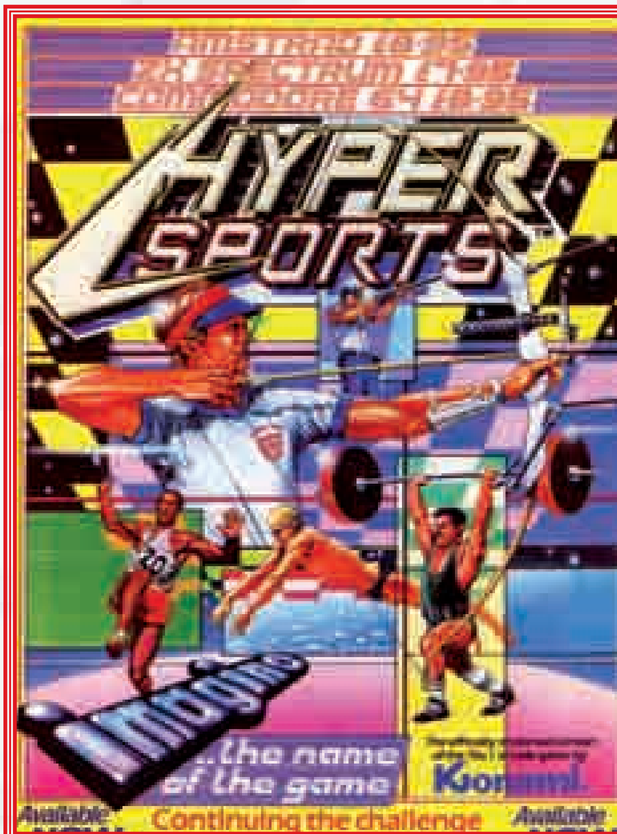
It's this above work ethic that helps make Sumo's latest release so enjoyable to play. As WayForward Technologies achieved with *Contra 4*, *New International Track & Field* is a classic example of those few games that can appeal to today's savvy audience and the very fans that made the franchise a success in the first place. And let's face it; there aren't many titles that are able to boast that.



SPORTS GALLERY



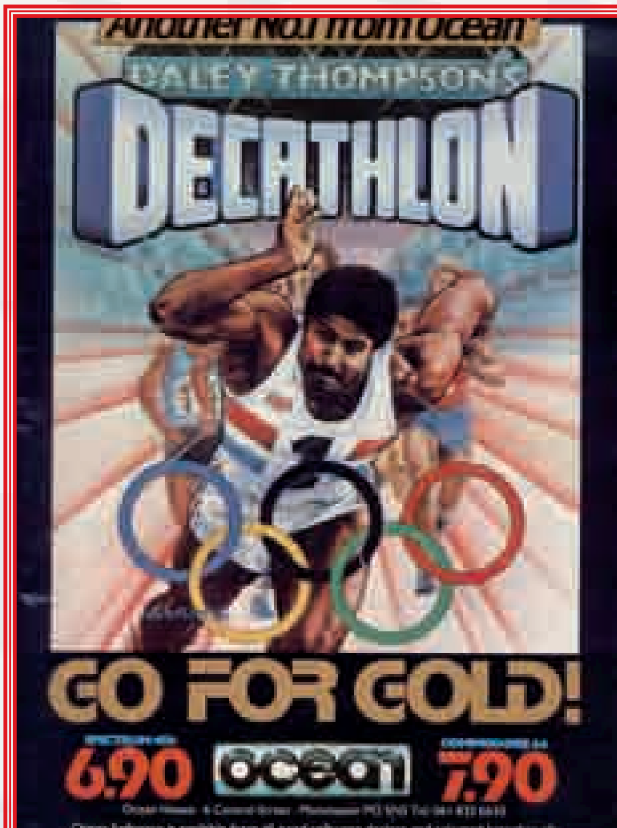
California Games Year Released: 1987



Hyper Sports Year Released: 1984



Track & Field Year Released: 1983



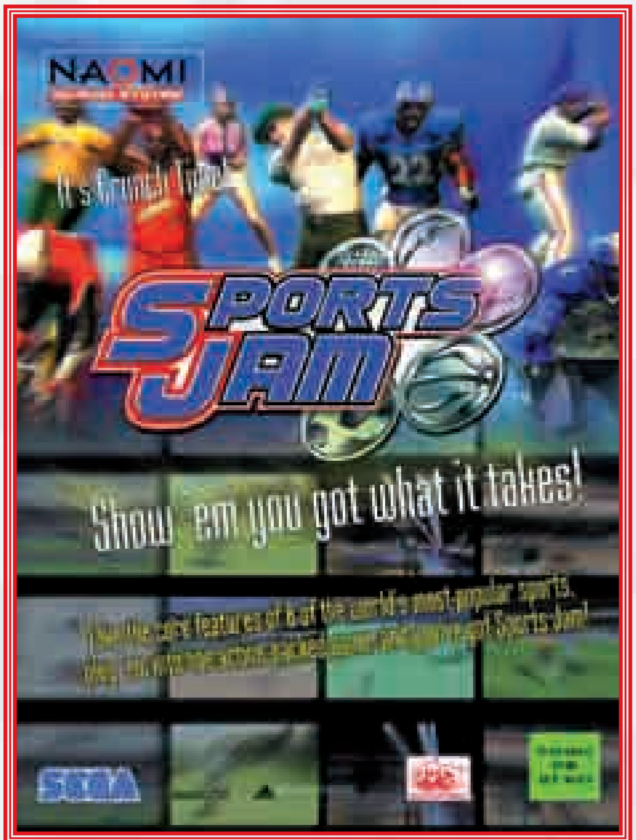
Daley Thompson's Decathlon Year Released: 1984



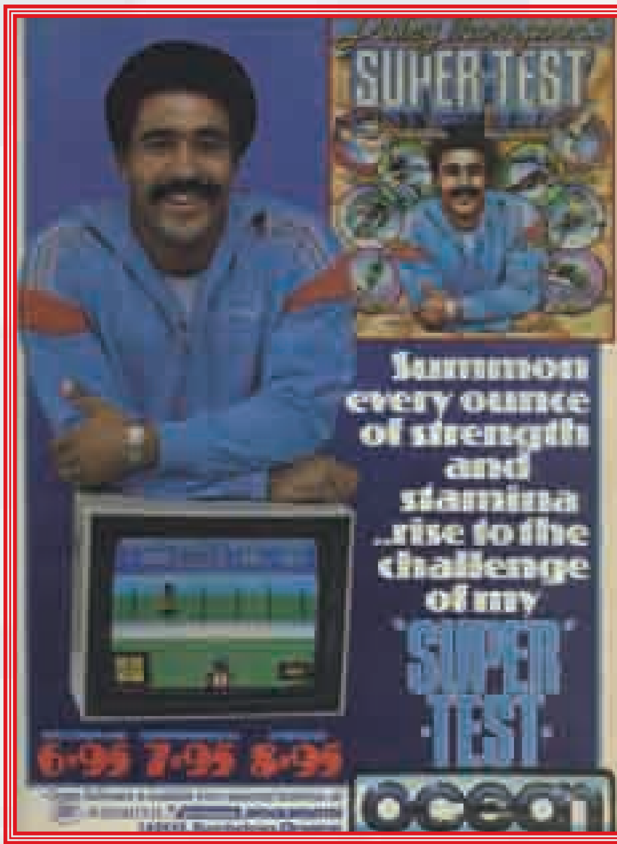
Sports Hero Year Released: 1984



Hyper Sports Special Year Released: 1988



Sports Jam Year Released: 2001



Daley Thompson's Super-Test Year Released: 1986

JAWS

DA DUM… DA DUM… DA DUM, DA-DUM-DA-DUM-DA-DUM!



- » **PUBLISHER:** LJN
- » **RELEASED:** 1987
- » **GENRE:** FISHING
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** NES
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** A FEW QUID



HISTORY

LJN, I hate you. Last issue, you made me sit through your bastard child of *Paperboy* in *Back To The Future*; this time you're forcing me to trawl through the videogame remains of one of my favourite films of all time: *Jaws*.

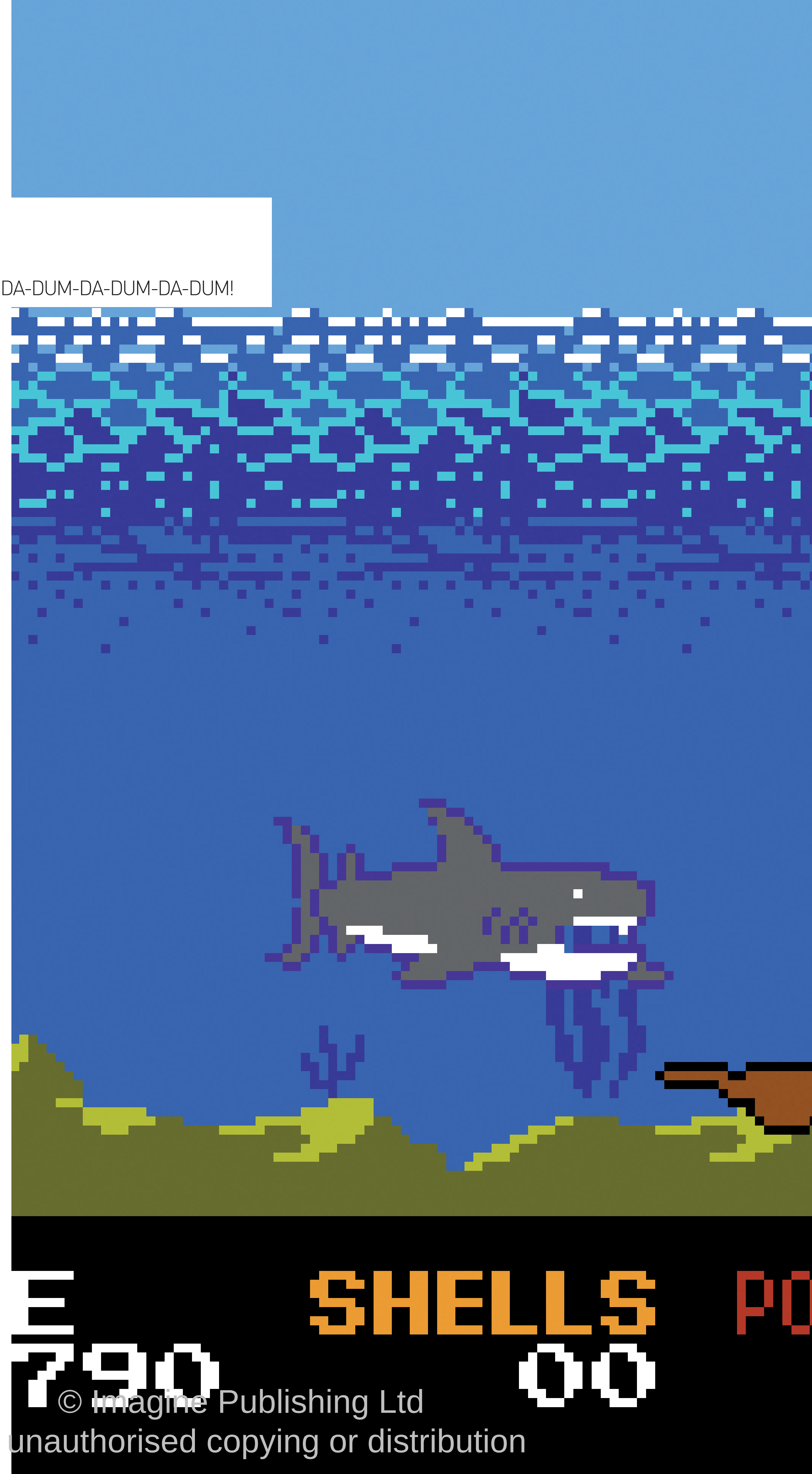
First of all, it's probably wise to clear something up. This game is called *Jaws*, but is based (very loosely) on the events of *Jaws: The Revenge* – by far the worst film in the franchise. If the game was called *Jaws: The Revenge*, I could have probably forgiven its drabness, seeing as the base material was so blatantly dire.

Now, I say 'loosely' based on the evidence presented to me on its last boss fight, which I'll come to in a bit. The rest of the game, though, after you click out of its title sequence, could conceivably be any dim game about deep-sea diving it wants to be.

Basically, according to this game, the plot of *Jaws* involves swimming around a harbour, blasting poor defenceless jellyfish and stingrays in the face with a harpoon, looting them of their 'conch shells' and crab-shaped possessions like some kind of aquatic mugger.

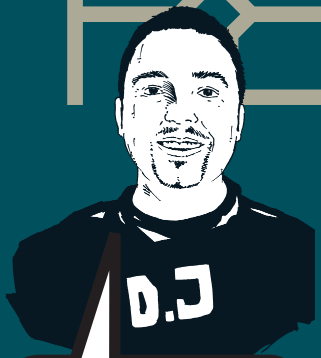
With these peculiar treasures in tow, you must travel to a compass on the game map and trade your booty for hi-tech equipment before venturing out to collect more shells to power up your harpoon attacks. The game finishes when you're strong enough to take on the giant sea beast. If you try and take on the titular fish while your man is at the power of two, it will take a million hits to knock down one slither of health bar, and when your time runs out, its health will be annoyingly replenished. This means *Jaws* involves a lot of fishing, a lot of pillaging, plenty of shopping and plenty of pointless giant shark confrontations that lead nowhere.

It's the battle with the final boss once you've powered up fully when a frustrating first-person re-creation of the face-palming ending of *Jaws: The Revenge* flashes up. You have to try and cause Jaws to bolt out of the water so you can impale him with your bowsprit. Fail in your mission, though, and it's back into a drink of monotony you go.



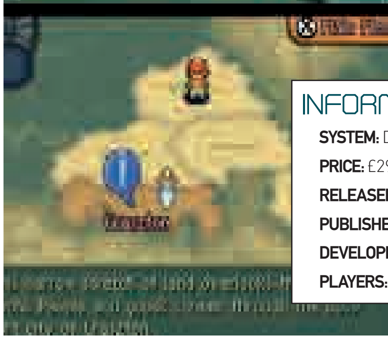

JAWS' POWER
1

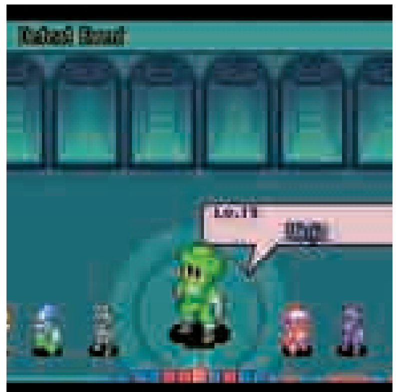
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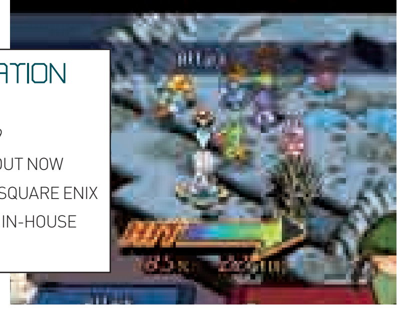


Another month, another round-up and this time we've a bumber crop of DS games for you to salivate over. Space Invaders Extreme is quite frankly the best game in the franchise, while New International Track & Field implements the button bashing of old in a brand new way. You've never had it so good.





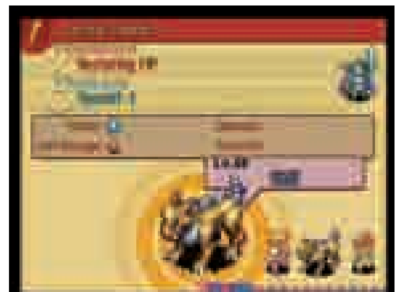


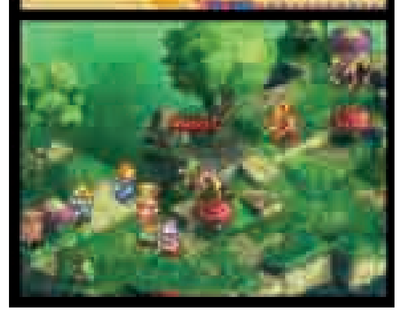


INFORMATION

SYSTEM: DS
PRICE: £29.99
RELEASED: OUT NOW
PUBLISHER: SQUARE ENIX
DEVELOPER: IN-HOUSE
PLAYERS: 1

» **(Below)** If you've seen a better-looking 2D game on the DS then let us know. We'd love to see it. **(Far left)** The world map is split up into territories, which are made up of smaller locations to visit. **(Left)** There are plenty of different jobs to unlock in *Tactics A2*





FINAL FANTASY TACTICS A2

I once clocked up over 250 hours on the original GBA *Tactics Advance* when a slipped disk left me on my back for three painful weeks. Needless to say I was a bit cautious about approaching Square Enix's sequel, fearing that a similar amount of time would be lost and never regained.

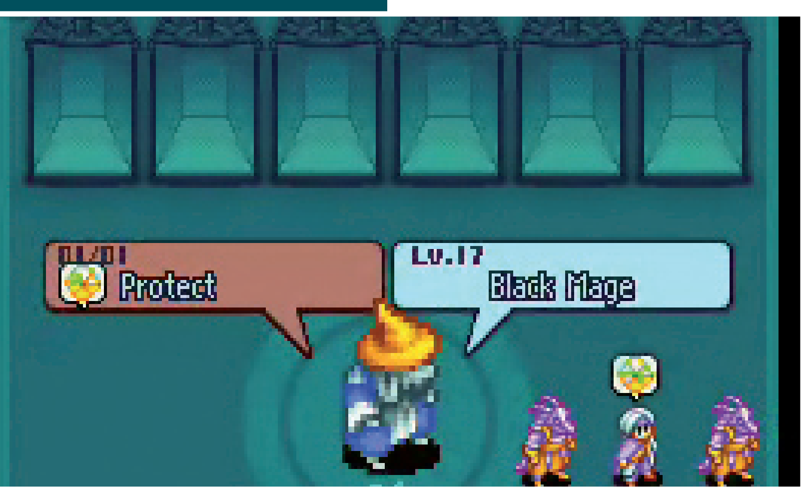
While I'm nowhere near to reaching the colossal figure racked up on the Game Boy Advance version, it's easy to see that this brilliant sequel is going to be just as time-consuming to play (although hopefully without the bad back to accompany it).

Although the story is as trite as you can expect – small boy gets sucked into the fantasy world of Ivalice via a magical book and must find his way home again – the gameplay is anything but, with *Tactics A2* proving to be an incredibly in-depth and complex beast that's totally at odds with its nauseatingly cute exterior.

Those who've played the GBA outing will find Square's update to be extremely similar with only the smallest of tweaks; with the most obvious being the way new items are gained. Defeating enemies in combat sees them dropping items that can then be used at the Bazaar. By combining various goodies it's possible to create new weapons, armour and items that can greatly enhance your party's power. It's a neat little system that's only let down by the fact that it's rather fiddly to use and that many of the items you initially create are hopelessly out of your price range.

Other new inclusions are the ability to compete in clan quests and build up your team's overall performance, as well as the option to claim territory by a rather nifty – but sadly underused – auction mode. Add in the Bazaar and the many items you can create there, the huge amount of quests you can accept and the insane amount of different character classes available, and *Tactics A2* offers a depth and longevity that few other DS titles are able to match.

Despite our huge fondness for the series, there's no denying that *Tactics A2* isn't without its problems, even though many will be utterly entranced by its absolutely exquisite visuals. It has some huge, often unfair difficulty spikes, some of the AI is a little ropey in places and it's initially a confusing mess of menus and overly complicated rules. Stick with it though, as underneath the insanely pretty skin is a deep absorbing adventure that will keep you going until the inevitable sequel pops up.



THE SCORES

Presentation 80%
Beautiful-looking menus but they can become rather confusing to navigate.

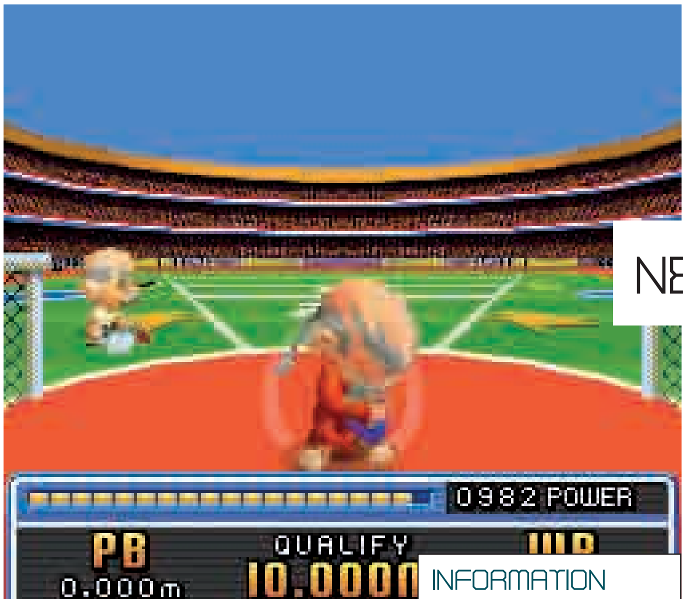
Aesthetics 98%
The prettiest 2D visuals to grace the DS.

Playability 77%
Complicated in places but stick with it and the classic gameplay soon shines through.

Longevity 98%
With 400 quests and 50 different classes to choose from it could be literally ages before you see everything *Tactics A2* has to offer.

Value for Money 88%
Worth every penny.

Overall 83%



NEW INTERNATIONAL TRACK & FIELD

You've got to hand it to Sumo Digital. Not content with splicing some of Sega's most popular characters onto *Virtua Tennis 3*'s slick engine, the Sheffield-based developer has now given a similar treatment to a motley selection of Konami mascots.

Timed to obviously cash in on the Olympics, *New International Track & Field* is nevertheless an impossibly polished game that not only pays homage to the original *Track & Field* classic – which sadly isn't included – but also proves to be incredibly fun to play. It even manages to oust *Mario & Sonic At the Olympic Games* as our favourite DS sports title.

Crafted with an obvious amount of love, *New International Track & Field* boasts 24 different events – ranging from the 100 metres to archery – a host of classic Konami characters and challenges to unlock, numerous gameplay modes and more additional content than virtually any other Nintendo DS game we've played. Best of all, however, is the superb online mode, that makes a real mockery of previous Nintendo DS titles and sets an impossibly high standard for other online DS games, sports or otherwise, to beat.

In fact, the only real niggles with have is that a few events – primarily discus – are tricky to get to grips with and the lack of customisable buttons (A and B are far too close for comfort). Other than these small problems Sumo and Konami's excellent *New International Track & Field* will easily keep you going till the next Olympics.

INFORMATION

SYSTEM: DS
PRICE: £29.99
RELEASED: OUT NOW
PUBLISHER: KONAMI
DEVELOPER: SUMO DIGITAL
PLAYERS: 1-4

» **(Above)** Quite possibly the most frustrating event you'll get to play. **(Below)** When he's not disembowelling unfortunates in *Silent Hill*, Pyramid Head turns out to be a damn fine athlete. **(Right)** Frogger and Pentarou together at last. We love you Sumo.





THE SCORES

Presentation 93%
Fantastic, plenty of menus, loads to uncover and the online mode is excellent.

Aesthetics 88%
Perfect, bright, cartoony visuals.

Playability 81%
Only a few needlessly fiddly events stop this from being instantly accessible to anyone with a DS.

Longevity 94%
There's a whole wealth of extras to unlock and the online multiplayer will keep you going forever.

Value for Money 91%
It's worth the price for the online mode alone.

Overall 89%

SPACE INVADERS EXTREME

INFORMATION

SYSTEM: DS
PRICE: £19.99
RELEASED: OUT NOW
PUBLISHER: SQUARE ENIX
DEVELOPER: TAITO
PLAYERS: 1-2



» Chaining enemies together is just one of the ways of getting ridiculously high scores.

Now this is how you remake a game. After churning out some extremely lazy and lacklustre sequels over the last 30 years, Taito has finally pulled its socks up and released the best *Space Invaders* game we've ever played.

While it initially appears to be no different to the plodding 1978 original – albeit with ridiculously funky visuals – *Extreme* quickly lives up to its new name and reveals an utterly superb shooter that takes the best elements from the long-running franchise and increases them a hundredfold.

Extreme not only constantly bombards you with clever attack waves and huge bosses, but also interjects the fast and furious gameplay with numerous nifty bonus rounds, meaning that there's never a chance to catch your breath.

The pulsating action is matched by a pounding soundtrack that beautifully melds with the on-screen action and further immerses you in the hypnotic light show taking place in front of your eyes.

Best of all however are *Space Invaders Extreme*'s wonderful scoring mechanics that are suitably in-depth and provide you with some brilliant opportunities to continually boost your score, giving shoot-'em-up junkies something to really sink their teeth into. Add in an excellent online multiplayer mode and a handy online leaderboard and *Space Invaders Extreme* proves itself to be a simplistic, but horribly addictive take on an old classic.



» Unlike the PSP version, the bosses are far more inventive and make great use of the DS's dual screens.



retro GAMER SIZZLER

THE SCORES

Presentation 80%
Elegant, simple-looking menus with a host of different options to choose from.

Aesthetics 88%
It's not quite as beautiful as Sega's *Rez*, but *Extreme* remains a wonderful fusion of sight and sound.

Playability 99%
The most simplistic gameplay in the world but it's still amazing fun to play.

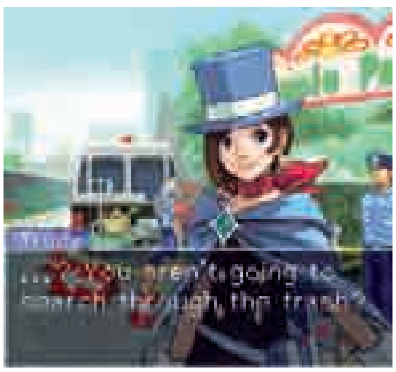
Longevity 96%
The main game is relatively easy to plough through but the replay value is superb.

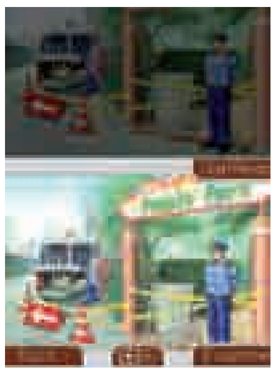
Value for Money 96%
£20 for one of the DS's most addictive blasters shouldn't be allowed.

Overall 93%



» **(Above)** The localisation of *Apollo Justice* is superb, with much of the dialogue being extremely funny. **(Right)** Use the stylus to examine the gorgeous looking locations and discover handy clues.





APOLLO JUSTICE: ACE ATTORNEY

INFORMATION

SYSTEM: DS
PRICE: £29.99
RELEASED: OUT NOW
PUBLISHER: CAPCOM
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
PLAYERS: 1

Despite its original Game Boy Advance roots, Capcom's *Phoenix Wright* trilogy made a surprisingly good translation to the DS and proved that the point-and-click adventures of old were far from dead, they'd just taken on a new form.

This latest offering from Capcom is the first title to be specifically created with the DS in mind and is all the better for it. While Phoenix has been replaced by new character Apollo Justice, the core gameplay is mostly identical to previous games, in so much that you have a series – four in fact – of progressively tougher cases to solve. In addition to simply interrogating suspects and searching locations for handy clues, the DS's touchscreen is now used for lots of forensic mini-games, which adds greatly to the already solid gameplay. Perhaps the best addition to *Apollo Justice* though is the new ability to read a suspect by studying their body movements. It adds a further layer of depth to an already immersive game.

For many, the best aspect of the *Phoenix Wright* series is the intelligent, often hilariously funny storylines and *Apollo Justice* is no different. Often twisting, yet always accessible, the four cases on offer here are no less entertaining and feature some great twists and turns as they play out, as well as featuring plenty of memorable characters.

Although it initially feels very similar to the previous three titles, there are more than enough new gameplay additions to ensure that fans of the series are going to be very happy indeed.

THE SCORES

Presentation 70%
Menus are easy to navigate, but a bit sparse.

Aesthetics 80%
There's not really a lot going on, but the locations and characters are well drawn.

Playability 81%
The new mini-games add a welcome touch to the original point-and-click-style gameplay.

Longevity 76%
It won't take as long to complete as previous games in the series and once you have beaten it there's no real incentive to return.

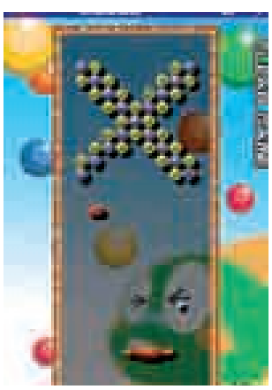
Value for Money 73%
It's not offering much new, but this is still worth picking up if you're a fan.

Overall 74%

ARKANOID DS

INFORMATION

SYSTEM: DS
PRICE: £19.99
RELEASED: OUT NOW
PUBLISHER: SQUARE ENIX
DEVELOPER: TAITO
PLAYERS: 1-4



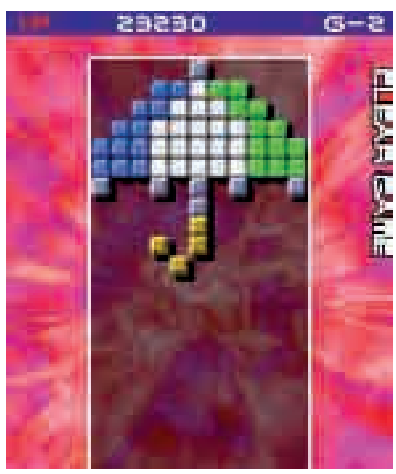
» At least Taito had the foresight to keep the fans happy…

***Arkanoid DS*, like *Space Invaders Extreme*, is another classic arcade game that's been given a fresh makeover for Nintendo's handheld. Sadly, that's about the only thing in common the two games have.**

Where *Extreme* is a bold, brash and wonderfully fresh spin on the 30-year-old franchise, *Arkanoid DS* is bland, dull and rather lifeless. Indeed the coolest aspect of the original Japanese offering (a paddle that replicated the dial from the arcade game) is no longer included, which would be fine if *Arkanoid DS* had plenty of exciting new gameplay modes to keep you interested. Sadly, it doesn't.

Maybe we're missing the point of *Arkanoid DS*, but after the utter excellence that is *Space Invaders Extreme*, we were hoping that *Arkanoid DS* would have been treated with a similar reverence. Granted it does have some wonderfully funky music and it faithfully re-creates the styling of the arcade original by spreading the action over the DS's two screens, but it just isn't enough.

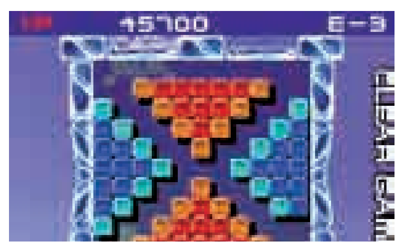
A few new modes debut but you can't make any real progress in the best mode – challenge – without slogging through the main mode. Sure you can save your game.



» Give yourself a pat on the back if you know what Taito game this umbrella features in.

Graphics are nothing more than functional, the new gameplay modes do little to expand on the 22-year-old gameplay of the original and it all just feels rather passé.

After the superb *Space Invaders Extreme*, *Arkanoid DS* comes across as little more than a wasted opportunity. What a pity.



THE SCORES

Presentation 40%
Functional is probably the fairest way to it.

Aesthetics 45%
While the graphics are nothing to write home about, *Arkanoid DS* does feature some amazingly funky tunes.

Playability 55%
It's certainly nice and easy to play, but there's just not enough here.

Longevity 55%
A save option means you'll breeze through the main game, while you're unlikely to constantly return to the challenge mode.

Value for Money 78%
£20 is definitely a bargain; it's just a shame that *Arkanoid DS* offers no real substance.

Overall 54%

HOMEBREW RATED

CONNECT 4 GOES ALL HYPERACTIVE ON US, WHILE RICHARD WILSON PORTS ONE OF THE SPECTRUM'S GREATEST GAMES TO THE HUMBLE AMSTRAD CPC 464

GO-MOKU

IT'S LIKE CONNECT 4 ON STEROIDS!

Go-Moku is a game of strategy for two people where the players take turns to place their marks within the play area. The aim is to place five of those marks in a row horizontally, vertically or diagonally while also attempting to block the other player from doing the same and the strategy comes from attempting to plan several moves in advance without leaving an opponent to their own devices.

The initial impression that this rendition, called *Go-Moku*, gives is of sparseness. All three versions are devoid of sound and there really isn't anything to write home about graphically either; red 'X' and cyan 'O' characters represent the human and computer respectively and a frame delineates the play area. While the unexpanded VIC-20 is probably full to the brim, there would still be memory remaining for music and some more detailed graphics to be included on the other platforms.



» Actually holding up against the VIC… for the moment.

Cosmetic details aside, where *Go-Moku* stands out from previous implementations is the skill of the computer player; the AI takes a few seconds to decide on its moves and plays a mean game… too mean for a lot of players and the chances are that most will be soundly thrashed by it. So while it's a good challenge for experienced players, generally speaking *Go-Moku* is let down by its lack of options to adjust the difficulty level for less seasoned gamers and the omission of a two-player option is also somewhat ironic considering the game's origins





» The calm before the mental storm on the C64 version.



FORMAT: UNEXPANDED VIC-20, C16 AND C64
DEVELOPED BY: NINO PORCINO
LINK: XOOMER.ALICE.IT/APORCINO/VIC20
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW
PRICE: FREE
REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

THE SCORES

PRESENTATION: 45% No joystick option and no difficulty settings.
AESTHETICS: 24% Absolutely mute and not much to look at either.
PLAYABILITY: 68% If you're experienced it's fun, otherwise you'll need practice.
LONGEVITY: 57% Again, for hardened fans there's a good challenge there.
VALUE FOR MONEY: N/A
OVERALL: 65%

3D DEATHCHASE

HYPERTHRUST CLEARED AND COUNTING; 5, 4, 3, 2, 1!

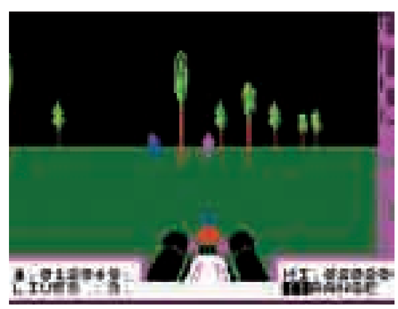
Have you ever felt the need to climb aboard a huge motorcycle in order to zoom through a forest, weaving through trees and attempting to shoot down other riders in an attempt to re-create the speeder bike chases from *Return Of The Jedi*?

Previously, as long as you were a Spectrum owner there was *3D Deathchase* to help suppress those urges and now Amstrad CPC-owning bike warriors can share in the carnage because their machine has been given a port of this previously exclusive title. And that's good because, despite being a fairly simple action game that requires a mere 16K machine, *3D Deathchase* is usually popular whenever Spectrum gamers talk about their favourites.



» Live out your *Return Of The Jedi* speeder bike fantasies.

Although the graphics have aged in the 25 years since its initial release, *3D Deathchase* has never been described as ugly and the various elements are easily recognisable; trees and opponents are reasonably defined as are the tanks and helicopters that roam across the horizon and, while everything is a little less colourful than the Spectrum, it's clear and can be easily discerned regardless of whether the player is taking part in a day or night patrol. The sense of speed is retained since, rather than being a straight port, the CPC version has had its engine re-tuned for the new platform; all of this attention to detail, along with some slightly beefed-up sound, makes the Amstrad version at least as enjoyable to play as the original if not more so.



» Its like those 'Police Crash Death Kill' TV shows!



FORMAT: AMSTRAD CPC
DEVELOPED BY: RICHARD "EXECUTIONER" WILSON
LINK: HTTP://BITWISE-SYSTEMS.COM/FILES/DEATHCHASE
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW
PRICE: FREE
REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

THE SCORES

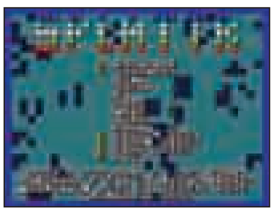
PRESENTATION: 72% The original loading picture and joystick/keyboard options.
AESTHETICS: 73% Simple but clear, well-defined graphics and a fast pace.
PLAYABILITY: 82% Simple, unpretentious action gaming!
LONGEVITY: 76% Not a huge game, but still very enjoyable.
VALUE FOR MONEY: N/A
OVERALL: 82%

ANOTHER CLASSIC HOMEBREW TITLE FOR THE SPECTRUM AND A GAME & WATCH RELEASE FOR THE VIC-20

SPLATTR

MOVE FAST OR YOU'LL BE SPLATTRED

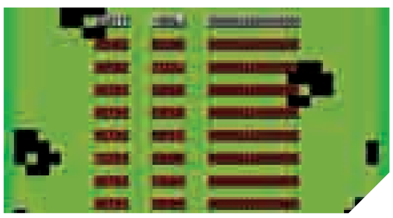
FORMAT: SPECTRUM
DEVELOPED BY: BOB SMITH
LINK: WWW.CRONOSOFT.CO.UK
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW
PRICE: £1.75 (EMULATOR IMAGE) OR £2.99 (CASSETTE)
REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK



It's time to lock and load, because the objective with *SplATTR* is simple; shoot it and, if it doesn't die, move!

The player controls what appears to be a gun sight, albeit one that loses energy if it moves over some of the objects in the distance and the fired bullets move 'into' the screen with slight delay before they detonate; meaning that a shot can be fired and the sight moved away while it explodes, which is essential to destroy some of the nastier targets that drain energy.

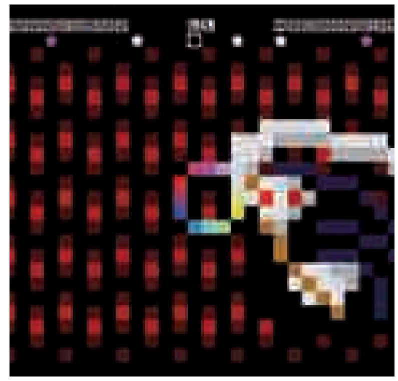
SplATTR's graphics take 'chunky' to a whole new level, but are colourful, detailed and pretty smooth moving with it. The objects are divided into those that need to be shot (which are flagged by the radar)



» Not a bad score for normal mode.



» Was it left or right at the spheres…?



» You'll have to excuse him, he's a little 'death'.

and others that drain energy and must be avoided. All of them are the sort of thing that presumably plague Matthew Smith's nightmares; toilets, wasps, millipedes and snowflakes all inhabit the play areas with differing attributes (if you'll excuse the pun) and the all-guns-blazing missions are broken up by maze-based stages where the objective is to simply navigate between the walls and shoot cakes.

The player gets to choose their path through the game and, if a level proves too difficult, it's possible to leave it and return to the menu to choose a different route. This, along with three levels of difficulty and 32 unique stages each with playing tips makes *SplATTR* more strategic than it first appears and a solid, enjoyable challenge.

THE SCORES

PRESENTATION: 92% Many options, three difficulties and great in-game features.
AESTHETICS: 85% Blocky but still attractive and an appropriate soundtrack.
PLAYABILITY: 90% Huge amounts of fun.
LONGEVITY: 86% Levels with different strategies and the option to choose routes.
VALUE FOR MONEY: 92% Three quid for lots of blasting action; not at all bad.
OVERALL: 91%

PARACHUTE

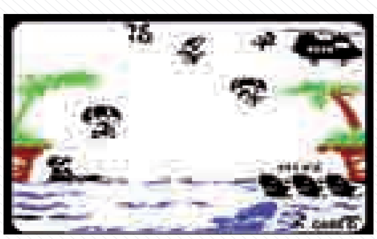
THE GAME & WATCH GAME… WITHOUT THE WATCH!



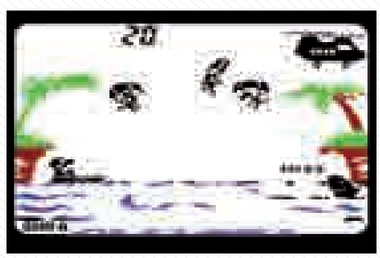
FORMAT: EXPANDED VIC-20
DEVELOPED BY: GLEN RICHARDS
LINK: ADAM.COM.AU/GRICHARDS/PARACHUTE.D64
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW
PRICE: FREE
REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

The marine training programme is harsh it seems; would-be jarheads have to dive from a helicopter and plummet towards shark-infested waters, placing their lives in the hands of a lone colleague waiting to catch them in a rowing boat.

The player is given the role of that lone trooper, floating mere inches above the Great Whites and waiting for it to start raining macho men. *Parachute* is based pretty closely on the Game & Watch title of the same name and, as part of that conversion process, the movement of the on-screen objects is deliberately coarse as they go from position to position, but this does have the



» My, what big teeth you have!



» You're going to need a bigger boat!



» Classic Game & Watch styling on the VIC-20.

advantage of making the movement rapid and lining up the boat a lot easier than it could have otherwise been.

Graphically, everything has that Game & Watch feel and it looks good for it too; there's also a quantity of colour splashed around that can be disabled for further authenticity and the simple sound effects during play are accompanied by a nice title tune. There are also two game modes, with the latter introducing more servicemen who swing from trees before launching themselves recklessly into the breach. Although a relatively simple game due to its origins, *Parachute* is great fun and what might otherwise be considered jerky movement is soon forgotten as the player gets caught up in working out the order in which the plummeting parachutists should be collected.

THE SCORES

PRESENTATION: 67% Doesn't support a joystick, but has two difficulty settings.
AESTHETICS: 83% Cute characters and backgrounds with a nice title tune, too.
PLAYABILITY: 86% Simple to get into but becomes challenging at a fair pace.
LONGEVITY: 76% Doesn't hold interest for very long periods, but fun in short bursts
VALUE FOR MONEY: N/A
OVERALL: 79%

BARGAIN HUNT

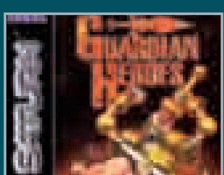
HUNT DOWN BARGAINS OR JUST DRINK UP THE LOVELINESS OF ALL THIS RETRO GOODNESS. FEAST YOUR EYES ON SIX PAGES OF THE VERY BEST THAT RETRO GAMING HAS TO OFFER…

Collecting retro games can be great fun, but you need to have a rough idea how much it's going to cost you. So here for your buying pleasure is Retro Gamer's buyer's guide. Where possible we have endeavoured to list the earliest international launch date, be it Asia, America or Europe. Prices were compiled from a variety of sources, including eBay, Japanese auctions, car-boot sales, traders and general consensus. Foreign items will often be cheaper in their local country, so regional differences should be considered. Also, bear in mind that online items will often be cheaper than you will find in specialist stores. If you see an item selling for far less, good for you! We aim to help with finding those bargains, but if you see an item sold for much higher make sure you really want to purchase it. Prices fluctuate and the market sways, so there can never be a concrete listing. Bear in mind that something is worth as much as someone else is willing to pay. No one is perfect though, and we will openly admit that with over a hundred different systems to list, mistakes can happen. If you spot a glaring error in our listings, please drop us an email at retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk and let us know about it.

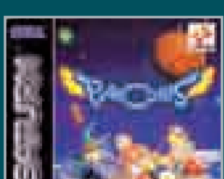
RETRO AUCTION WATCH

Retro Gamer will be sifting through countless pages of eBay and reporting back on any items of interest (hardware and software) that have caught our eye. This month we're going to be looking at Sega Saturn games.

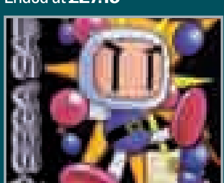
GUARDIAN HEROES
System: **Saturn**
Normally sells for **£35**
Ended at **£27.01**



PARODIUS
System: **Saturn**
Normally sells for **£30**
Ended at **£35.90**



SATURN BOMBERMAN
System: **Saturn**
Normally sells for **£15**
Ended at **£27.13**



3DO



3DO GOLDSTAR
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£45+ ($83 - $111)**



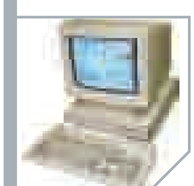
PANASONIC FZ-1 (FRONT LOADER)
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 - £60 ($74 - $111)**



PANASONIC FZ-10 (TOP LOADER)
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**

While 3DO systems had much potential, there wasn't enough software support and it eventually stopped production. There were still some great games released.
- STAR CONTROL 2
- RETURN FIRE
- CRASH AND BURN

ACORN



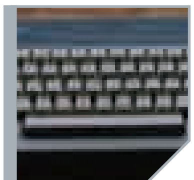
ARCHIMEDES
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) with games**

Early RISC-based home computer, quite powerful at the time.



ATOM
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92)**

Extremely old home computer by Acorn that's now hard to find.



ACORN ELECTRON
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**

Budget version of the BBC home computer (below).



BBC MICRO
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**

A classic British home computer, and quite popular. Affectionately known as 'the Beeb'.
- EXILE
- ELITE
- WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST

AMSTRAD



CPC 464
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**

Early classic 8-bit home computer from Amstrad, designed to compete against the C64 and ZX Spectrum. This early model has a built-in cassette tape deck. Beware the models that come with a green screen monitor.



CPC 664
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£90+ ($165+)**

Like the 464, except with a floppy disk drive. A short-lived model that was soon replaced by the superior 6128.



CPC 6128
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25+ ($46+)**

Improved model which doubled the RAM of previous iterations. Later 'Plus' models came with a cartridge port.
- GET DEXTER
- XOR
- SORCERY +



GX4000
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**

Console version of the CPC Plus range, came with joypads. Limited range of games.
- BURNIN' RUBBER
- PANG
- SWITCHBLADE

APPLE



APPLE II
» YEAR **1977**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+) with games**

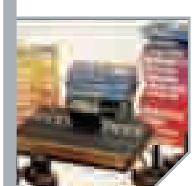
Like many early computers the Apple II was hand-built and sold to enthusiasts.
- KARATEKA
- ULTIMA IV
- LODE RUNNER

ATARI



400/800/600XL/XE
» YEAR **1979**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**

Series of old 8-bit Atari home computers.
- DROP ZONE
- THRUST
- ZYBEX



2600 (VCS)
» YEAR **1977**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**

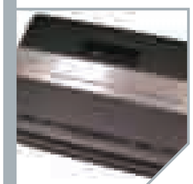
Earliest console by Atari. Various models, many with the classic wood panelling effect. Many UK gamers had their first taste of videogames on this.
- PITFALL
- ADVENTURE
- COSMIC ARK

RARITY GUIDE

ROCKING HORSE SHIT
HEN'S TEETH
LUCKY FIND
EBAY REGULAR
CAR-BOOT SALE BARGAIN



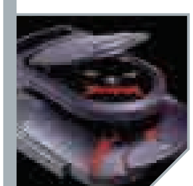
5200
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
Unpopular successor to the 2600, regarded as an Atari 400 without a keyboard.
- RESCUE ON FRACTALUS
- DIG DUG
- ZAXXON



7800
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Handily, Atari made the 7800 backwards compatible with the ever popular 2600.
- KARATEKA
- CHOPLIFTER
- WINTER GAMES



JAGUAR
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Failed attempt to beat the PlayStation and Saturn in the console race. Few decent games. But it does have Jeff Minter's *Tempest*!
- TEMPEST 2000
- ALIEN VS PREDATOR
- BATTLESPHERE (RARE AND EXPENSIVE!)



JAGUAR CD
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70 ($129)**
Rare and overpriced CD add-on for the Jaguar. Very few games, but it does look very much like a toilet seat!
- BATTLEMORPH CD
- HIGHLANDER CD
- TEMPEST 2000 MUSIC CD

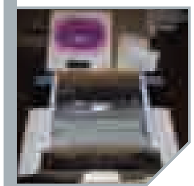


LYNX I/II (2ND IS SMALLER)
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
Powerful handheld from Atari that failed due to poor marketing and battery life.
- BLUE LIGHTNING
- CALIFORNIA GAMES
- DIRTY LARRY RENEGADE COP



ST
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+) depending on model**
This is an Atari home computer and a big rival to the Amiga. There are many different models available, of various specifications.
- DUNGEON MASTER
- POPULOUS
- DAMOCLES

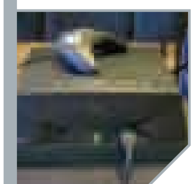
BANDAI



GUNDAM RX-78 COMPUTER
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£75+ ($138+) prices fluctuate wildly**
Ultra-rare, early Japanese games computer by Bandai. Aimed at both gamers and anime fans. Expect to pay a much higher price for a machine that's in mint condition.



PLAYDIA
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£90 ($166) and upwards according to eBay**
Bizarre Japan-only console, apparently made for kids.
- SAILOR MOON
- ULTRAMAN
- DRAGON BALL Z



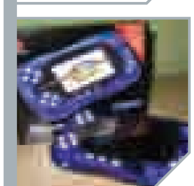
PIPPIN (ATMARK)
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £500+ ($921+)**
A strange hybrid system from Bandai and Apple. Very expensive and with very few games available. Its high price means that it's normally only sought after by collectors.
- RACING DAYS
- DRAGON BALL Z
- GUNDAM TACTICS



WONDERSWAN (B/W)
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**



WONDERSWAN COLOR
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**



WONDERSWAN CRYSTAL
» YEAR **2000**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**
Handheld system by Bandai, fairly popular. Can now be bought very cheaply, especially in Japan. Be sure to buy the SwanCrystal, which is basically an improved 'Color' model. Both colourised models can run B/W WS games.
- GUNPEY EX
- SWAN COLOSSEUM
- JUDGEMENT SILVERSWORD

COMMODORE



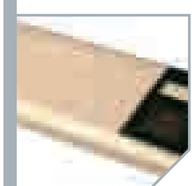
AMIGA 500/600/1200
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+) more with games, depending on model**
Classic and incredibly popular 16-bit home computer by Commodore that was designed to compete against the Atari ST range. Vast array of different models with differing specs. The Amiga 500 (with a RAM upgrade) is a particular favourite with many gamers.
- SPEEDBALL 2: BRUTAL DELUXE
- LEMMINGS
- SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER



C16/PLUS 4
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15+ ($28+)**
The less well-known sibling of the C64, but without the compatibility of its peers.
- TUTTI FRUTTI
- MONTY ON THE RUN
- KIKSTART



C64
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**
One of the bestselling 8-bit home computers of all time. Competed against the Spectrum and Amstrad home computers. Featured the wonderful SID sound chip that was put to amazing use by the likes of Ben Daglish and Rob Hubbard.
- WIZBALL
- MAYHEM IN MONSTERLAND
- PARADROID



C64 GS (GAMES SYSTEM)
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
Commodore's cartridge-based machine that tried to take on both Nintendo and Sega. Sadly failed due to a lack of support from most publishers.
- PANG
- NAVY SEALS
- BATTLE COMMAND



C128
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
Three machines (CPM, C64 and C128) in one box. Specialised software is relatively small in number.

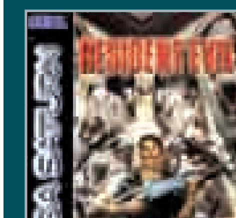


CDTV
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
Commodore aimed for the 'every home should have one' market and missed by a country

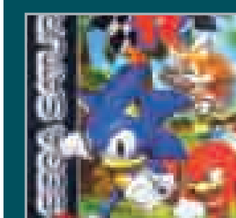
MANX TT SUPERBIKE
System: **Saturn**
Normally sells for **£5**
Ended at **No Sale**



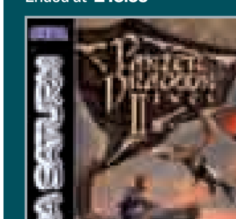
RESIDENT EVIL
System: **Saturn**
Normally sells for **£5**
Ended at **77 pence**



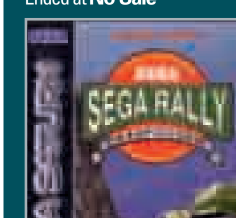
SONIC R
System: **Saturn**
Normally sells for **£6**
Ended at **£3.45**



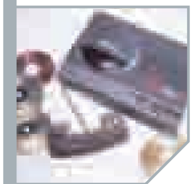
PANZER DRAGOON II: ZWEI
System: **Saturn**
Normally sells for **£12**
Ended at **£18.59**



SEGA RALLY
System: **Saturn**
Normally sells for **£2**
Ended at **No Sale**



mile. A curious mixture of games and educational material.



CD32
» YEAR **1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**

CD-based console that followed on from the experimental CDTV. Sometimes described as a consolised Amiga 1200 with CD drive. Despite featuring some extremely impressive games, the majority failed to improve on their 500 and 1200 counterparts.
- EXILE
- SIMON THE SORCERER
- ALIEN BREED 3D



VIC-20
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+) based on condition/extras**

The computer that established the Commodore brand.
- HELLGATE
- SERPENTINE
- SUPER SMASH

FUJITSU



FUJITSU FM COMPUTERS
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100+ ($184+)**

Early Nineties home computers by Fujitsu.



FUJITSU FM TOWNS MARTY
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£200+ ($368+)**

A legendary console, which contains both a CD and disk drive. Based on Fujitsu's old FM Towns computers, and mostly backwards compatible with the majority of games. Very expensive (especially if you find a machine in mint condition), but with a lot of chic!
- ZAK MC KRAKEN
- TATSUJIN OU
- SCAVENGER 4

MISCELLANEOUS



BALLY ASTROCADE
» YEAR **1978**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**

Early videogame system that used interchangeable cartridges, developed by the Bally games division at Midway Games.
- GATE ESCAPE
- ICBM ATTACK
- TREASURE COVE



BARCODE BATTLER
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£5 ($18)**

Handheld LCD game, where you must swipe barcoded cards (or barcodes taken from soup packets!) to gather stats, and then battle against someone else who swiped barcodes. We're not making this up…
- THE TING TINGS: WE STARTED NOTHING
- SUEDE: SUEDE
- DURAN DURAN: THE WEDDING ALBUM



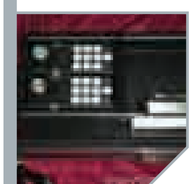
CASIO LOOPY
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**

More insanity from the Land of the Rising Sun. This is a console designed especially for female gamers and it even allows stickers to be printed out… Casio had hoped it would do better than its PV-1000 console released in 1983.



FAIRCHILD CHANNEL F
» YEAR **1976**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) from the USA**

The first commercially released console that used programmable cartridges. A real piece of history. Despite this, it's surprisingly cheap to purchase (although importing from the US may cost a fair amount).



COLECOVISION
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) standalone**

Coleco's third-generation videogame system. Quite a few decent games, and considering its age it's a fairly powerful machine. Many of its arcade conversions were considered superior to the other systems on the market.
- CONGO BONGO
- SMURPH RESCUE
- CABBAGE PATCH KIDS



DRAGON 32/64
» YEAR **1982/3**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£8 ($15) very cheap on eBay**

Early British home computer that tried to cash in on the early Eighties boom. Short-lived, though quite popular. The 64 model was released roughly a year after the 32.
- GRID RUNNER
- DEVIL ASSAULT
- CAVE FIGHTER



ARCADIA 2001
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**

Failed console by Emerson that had numerous different clones released, as well.
- FUNKY FISH
- JUNGLER
- ROBOT KILLER



EPOCH CASSETTE VISION
» YEAR **1981**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**

Obscure early Japanese console, which in 1983 had a budget 'Junior' model released.



EPOCH SUPER CASSETTE VISION
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**

Epoch's successor to the Cassette Vision, it was also marketed in Europe under the Yeno label. Apparently it only had around 30 games released for it.



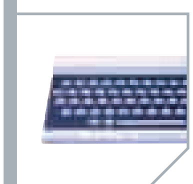
INTELLIVISION
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40+ ($74+) depending on extras**

Developed by Mattel, the system was revolutionary. It was the first console to be technically 16-bit, go online (to download games), and it featured voice synthesis. Today it still has a strong retro following.
- FROG BOG
- ARMOR BATTLE
- LOCK 'N' CHASE



ODYSSEY
» YEAR **1972**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**

The original home videogame console, even before Atari got in on the act. Created by Ralph Baer, this is the ultimate piece of gaming history. Fortunately, it can be purchased relatively cheaply.



ORIC-1
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**

The Oric-1 was a highly underrated 8-bit bit home computer created by Oric Products International. Despite having many games that were arguably superior to those on the Spectrum it was sadly unable to compete with the rival machine's high sales.
- XENON1
- INSECT INSANITY
- RAT SPLAT



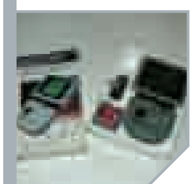
PLAYSTATION
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) depending on condition/model**

After manufacturing MSX machines, Sony re-entered the games hardware market and this time took it over. There are countless excellent PS games. It was later re-released as the PSone, which is more expensive but looks much nicer.
- CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT
- FINAL FANTASY VII
- RIDGE RACER



SAM COUPÉ
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 - £200 ($92 - $368) allegedly for a mint system**

Originally developed by Miles Gordon Technology in Swansea, the Sam Coupé was a unique 8-bit British home computer that didn't fare very well. It could even emulate the 48K Speccy to a degree.
- DEFENDERS OF THE EARTH
- ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE ROBOT MONSTERS
- PRINCE OF PERSIA



SUPERVISION
» YEAR **1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**

Marketed by several different companies, this was essentially a cut-price competitor to the monochrome Game Boy. Unsurprisingly, it was not manufactured for very long and is now hard to find.



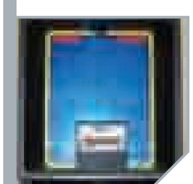
TIGER ELEC. GAME.COM
» YEAR **1997**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**

Attempt by Tiger Electronics to compete against the Game Boy.
- RESIDENT EVIL 2
- SONIC JAM
- DUKE NUKEM 3D



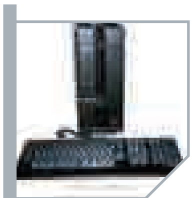
TOMY TUTOR (MK1/JR/MK2)
» YEAR **1983/4**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**

Series of old computers by Tomy.



VECTREX (MB/GCE)
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**

The only home system ever to come with a vector display, enabling true vector graphics.
- SPACE WAR
- SPINBALL
- HYPERCHASE



X68000
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£90+ ($166+)**
Home computer by Sharp, released only in Japan. Famous for its arcade ports.
- CASTLEVANIA CHRONICLES
- STREET FIGHTER 2
- FINAL FIGHT

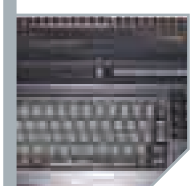
MSX



MSX 1
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**
An early attempt to create a standard gaming platform, fairly common in the UK.
- PENGUIN ADVENTURE
- KNIGHTMARE
- THE GOONIES



MSX 2
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Updated and more powerful version of the MSX, very popular in Holland and Brazil where even today some excellent home-brew games are developed.
- METAL GEAR 2
- ALESTE 2
- VAMPIRE KILLER

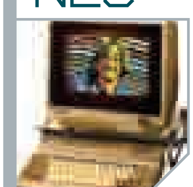


MSX 2+
» YEAR **1988**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
Another hardware update that proved to be very popular in Holland.
- SPACE MANBOW
- GOLVELLIUS 2
- F1 SPIRIT 3D SPECIAL



MSX TURBO R
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
A final and not very popular hardware update, that was virtually exclusive to Japan.
- FRAY
- PRINCESS MAKER
- ILLUSION CITY

NEC



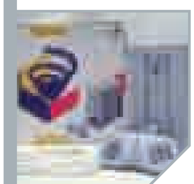
PC-6### (ALSO MK II)
» YEAR **1984 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+) depending on model**
Quite old 6000 series of home computers by NEC, with a lot of cool Japanese games for it. Released in the US as the NEC Trek. Be careful of shipping prices.



PC-8801
» YEAR **1981 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37) cheap on Yahoo! Japan**
Old computer series by NEC, with several different models over the years. Has a massive roster of cool games, including the original *Silpheed*. While very cheap to buy online from Japan, shipping is expensive.



PC-9801
» YEAR **1983 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65) cheap on Yahoo! Japan**
Another home computer series by NEC, again with many great games. Laptop versions also exist. Most games by Falcom are worth watching out for.



PCFX
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92) prices can fluctuate**
32-bit tower console by NEC, resembles a PC. Released in Japan only, had software support until 1998. Only a few action titles. Apparently, it also had quite a bit of hentai on it.
- LAST IMPERIAL PRINCE
- CHOUJIN HEIKI ZEROIGAR (SHMUP)
- ZENKI FX (FIGHTER)



PC-ENGINE
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£55 ($101)**
Classic piece of Japanese hardware from NEC which features many excellent arcade ports and a few exclusives. The CoreGrafx system is basically a PC-Engine with AV output.



PC-ENGINE GT
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70+ ($129+)**
Portable handheld version of the Japanese PC-Engine that played all Japanese Hu-Cards.



TURBO GRAFX-16
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
American version of the PC-Engine. It has territory lockout, so the two systems' Hu-Cards are not compatible.



TURBO EXPRESS
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92) massive fluctuations**
Portable handheld version of the American Turbo Grafx-16.
- BONK/PC KID SERIES
- PC KID
- OUTRUN



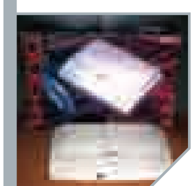
SUPER GRAFX
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147) prices can fluctuate**
Meant to be the successor to the original PC-Engine, but sadly failed due to lack of games. It is backwards compatible, but only had six games specifically released for it.
- ALDYNES
- DARIUS PLUS
- GHOULS AND GHOSTS



PC-E CD-ROM/ TURBO GRAFX CD
» YEAR **1988**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**
CD-ROM add-on for the PC-E and TG16, released in 1988 and 1989. It has no region lockout.



PC-E DUO/TURBO DUO
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£120 ($221)**
System that combines the PC-E/TG16 with its CD add-on. Released in both Japan and America in 1991 and 1992. The CD games still have no region lockout.

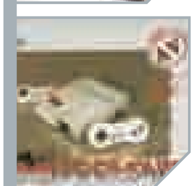


DUO-R
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**
Stripped-down white version of the PC-E Duo, without headphone port. Later in 1994 a Duo-RX version was released, slightly blue in colour and came with a six-button control pad.
- DRACULA X
- SHUBIBINMAN 3
- LORDS OF THUNDER

NINTENDO



FAMICOM
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£60 ($111)**
Nintendo's first foray into the home console market, with over 1,000 games to choose from!

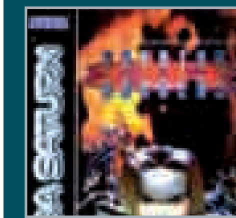


FAMICOM AV
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**
A cheaper remodelled version of the Famicom, now with AV output.



FAMICOM DISK SYSTEM
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70 ($129)**
Nintendo's attempt to bring cheap rewritable disk-based gaming to the masses. Be warned, the drive belts break very easily.

BURNING RANGERS
System: **Saturn**
Normally sells for **£30**
Ended at **£19.87**



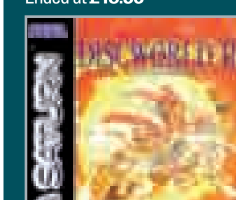
FIGHTERS MEGAMIX
System: **Saturn**
Normally sells for **£10**
Ended at **£3.12**



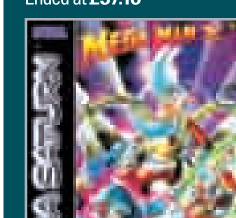
REVOLUTION X
System: **Saturn**
Normally sells for **£25**
Ended at **£37.98**

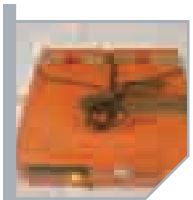


DISCWORLD II: MISSING PRESUMED…!?
System: **Saturn**
Normally sells for **£30**
Ended at **£18.36**



MEGAMAN X3
System: **Saturn**
Normally sells for **£45**
Ended at **£37.16**





SHARP FAMICOM TWIN

» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184)**

Combined Famicom and Disk System, by Sharp.

- OTOCKY
- NAZO NO MURASAMEJOU
- PATLABOR



GAME&WATCH

» YEAR **1980-1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£1+ ($2+)**

Series of handheld LCD games that were created by the legendary Gunpei Yokoi.



GAME BOY B/W

» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£5 ($9)**

Nintendo's original handheld portable, with interchangeable cartridges. Despite its age, and monochrome display, there are many excellent classic GB games.

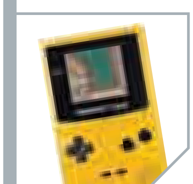


GAME BOY POCKET

» YEAR **1996**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£8 ($15)**

A smaller and more compact Game Boy, with improved screen. A Japanese version with built-in light was released and sells for a much higher price.

- SUPER MARIO LAND
- TETRIS
- POKÉMON



GAME BOY COLOR

» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£12 ($22)**

Colour-based version of the classic Game Boy. Backwards compatible, but it also has several exclusive games that were rather special.

- METAL GEAR SOLID: GHOST BABEL
- RESIDENT EVIL GAIDEN
- HARVEST MOON 3



GAME BOY ADVANCE

» YEAR **2001**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**



N64

» YEAR **1996**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**

Nintendo's last cartridge-based console, competitor to the PlayStation and Saturn. Has several highly sought-after classics. Some games (like *Donkey Kong*) require the RAM expansion pack and wouldn't run without it.

- SUPER MARIO 64
- PILOTWINGS 64
- BLAST CORPS

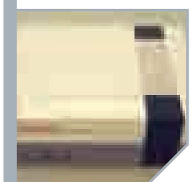


N64 DD

» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£150+ ($276+)**

Another attempt by Nintendo to incorporate disc media with one of its cartridge-based consoles. Expensive and very few games were released.

- F-ZERO EXPANSION KIT
- MARIO ARTIST SERIES
- DOSHIN THE GIANT



NES (TOASTER)

» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**

The Western version of the Famicom, popular the world over. Plenty of great Nintendo classics to choose from, and it's very cheap too.



NES (DOG BONE)

» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92)**

Remodelled and improved version of the traditional NES. Region lockout was also removed, meaning all 72-pin based NES games work.

- METROID
- THE LEGEND OF ZELDA
- SUPER MARIO BROS. 3



SNES (SUPER FAMICOM IN JAPAN)

» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**

Nintendo's successor to the NES, and one of the company's most popular machines. A retro staple with a fantastic selection of games.



SNES 2 (KNOWN AS 'JR' IN JAPAN)

» YEAR **1997**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**

Cheaper and redesigned SNES.

- SUPER METROID
- SECRET OF MANA
- SUPER MARIO WORLD



VIRTUAL BOY

» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**

Nintendo's failed attempt at a pseudo Virtual Reality games system. Quite a novelty as there is nothing else like it. Be warned though, as many gamers have complained that the machine gives them headaches – never a good thing.

- INSMOUSE NO YAKATA (HP LOVECRAFT INSPIRED FPS)
- WARIO LAND
- RED ALARM

PHILIPS



CD-I 205/210/220

» YEAR **from 1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**

Unique system by Philips. The 200 series consists of front-loading systems, with each one having slightly different specifications.

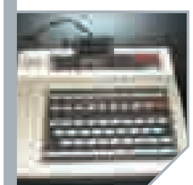


CD-I 450/500

» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) more with DVC**

This is the consolised version of previous models, with the latter 500 series featuring an integrated DVC.

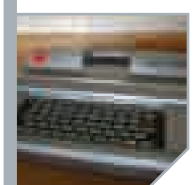
- BURN CYCLE
- HOTEL MARIO



VIDEOPAC G7000

» YEAR **1978**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**

Popular across the world (especially Brazil and Holland) and known also as the 'Odyssey 2'.



VIDEOPAC G7400

» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**

A successor to the G7000 that was backwards compatible.

- QUEST FOR RINGS
- PICKAXE PETE
- MUNCHKIN

SEGA



32X

» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65) (with leads)**

Failed Mega Drive add-on, designed to enhance its capabilities.

- KNUCKLES CHAOTIX
- KOLIBRI
- DARXIDE



DREAMCAST

» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46) depending on extras**

Sega's final hardware release. No gamer should be without it. Amazing official roster of games, plus it can emulate older systems.

- SHENMUE
- SKIES OF ARCADIA
- REZ

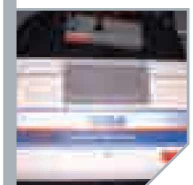


GAME GEAR

» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28) more with extras**

Handheld by Sega, designed to compete against the Game Boy. Low battery life, but effectively a portable Master System. With add-on tuner, could also be used as a TV (as shown here).

- SHINOBI 2
- COLUMNS
- TV TUNER



SG-1000 (PLUS THE MARK II AND III)

» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50-£150 ($80-$260)**

Sega's first console, and a piece of history. The Mark III model would later be redesigned to become the Master System. Like the Japanese Famicom, it's much nicer than the UK version.



SC-3000

» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £50 ($92)**

Computer equivalent of the SG-1000, also by Sega. Was popular in Australia and other ex-colonies. Mutually compatible with the SG-1000 as well.

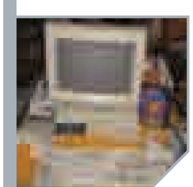


MASTER SYSTEM I/II

» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) with leads etc**

Popular Sega 8-bit console, which competed against the NES. Adapted from previous systems.

- PHANTASY STAR
- WONDER BOY 3: DRAGON'S TRAP
- CALIFORNIA GAMES



AMSTRAD MEGA PC

» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) according to eBay**

A strange hybrid between an Amstrad PC and a Mega Drive. A nice collectable oddity, though according to past eBay auctions, not a high seller.



TERADRIVE

» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £100 ($184)**

Another Mega Drive computer hybrid. Released earlier than the Amstrad

hybrid, these systems have no connection. Due to being exclusive to Japan, they are seldom seen in the wild. Likely to be very expensive if you are able to find one.



MEGA DRIVE/ GENESIS I/II
» YEAR **1989+**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) depending on model**
The big daddy, Sega's most successful console and a retro classic.

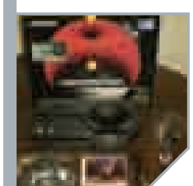


GENESIS 3
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**
Developed by Majesco. This third, cut-down model is rarer and has some compatibility issues. USA only.



NOMAD
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184)**
Handheld Mega Drive. Pricey, low battery life and some compatibility problems.

- RANGER-X
- THUNDER FORCE IV
- COMIX ZONE



MULTIMEGA/ WONDERMEGA/ CDX/X'EYE
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100+ ($184+) depending on system**
A series of different hybrid MD and MCD systems, released in the three main territories.



MEGA CD (SCD) I/II
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+) depending on system**
Sega's CD add-on for the Mega Drive. Despite heavy criticism, has many excellent games.

- POPFUL MAIL
- SNATCHER
- SONIC CD



PICO
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37) more with games**
Toy computer released for young children. The games come in nice storybook-style boxes.

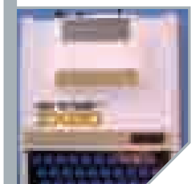
- SONIC'S GAMEWORLD
- ECCO JR AND THE GREAT OCEAN HUNT
- THE LION KING: ADVENTURES AT PRIDE ROCK



SATURN
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
Sega's competition against the PlayStation and N64. A real 2D powerhouse that, despite an amazing catalogue of games, never really took off.

- BURNING RANGERS
- RADIANT SILVERGUN
- PANZER DRAGOON SAGA

SINCLAIR

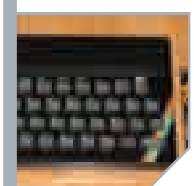


ZX80
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£200 ($368) apparently if boxed and mint**
Very early British home computer from Sinclair. Low capability meant limited gaming possibilities. Now extremely hard to get hold of.



ZX81
» YEAR **1981**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £70 ($129) if mint**
Improved home computer from Sinclair, with black and white ASCII graphics. Not as hard to source as a ZX80, but still commands a respectable price.

- 3D MONSTER MAZE
- MAZOGS
- SABOTAGE



ZX SPECTRUM 48K
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**



ZX SPECTRUM 128K
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**



ZX SPECTRUM+
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**



ZX SPECTRUM +2
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**



ZX SPECTRUM +3
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**
The British classic loved by many. A vast improvement over previous Sinclair computers, the Spectrum was normally compared against the C64 and Amstrad home computers, which in turn caused many playground arguments over who had the better machine.

- HEAD OVER HEELS
- 3D DEATHCHASE
- SKOOL DAZE

SNK



NEO-GEO AES
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£150+ ($276+)**
High-powered home system by SNK. Features many high-quality arcade games. Sadly, many titles are now ridiculously expensive to purchase.



NEO-GEO MVS
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £70 ($129) multi-slot systems cost more**
High-powered arcade system by SNK, which many people prefer over the home-based AES due to lower pricing of games. (The majority of Neo-Geo titles appeared on both systems, or alternatively can be converted.)

- METAL SLUG 3
- KING OF FIGHTERS 96
- BLAZING STAR

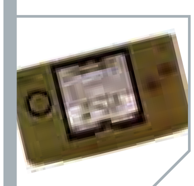


NEO-GEO CD
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184) varies**



NEO-GEO CDZ
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80+ ($147+)**
CD-based Neo-Geo systems, an attempt by SNK to lower the cost of Neo-Geo games. The CDZ is cheaper and has improved loading times. Most CD titles are ports from the AES/MVS.

- VIEWPOINT
- AGGRESSORS OF DARK COMBAT
- SAMURAI SHODOWN RPG



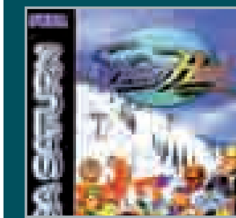
NEO-GEO POCKET (B/W)
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**



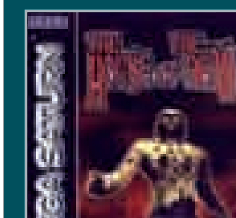
NEO-GEO POCKET COLOR
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**
Handheld Neo-Geo systems by SNK that sadly failed to compete with the Game Boy, despite featuring some great games. Still a wonderful little system, though. Be sure to buy the later colour screen model.

- FASELEI!
- CARD FIGHTERS (CAPCOM/SNK)
- MATCH OF THE MILLENNIUM (CAP VS SNK)

WINTER HEAT
System: **Saturn**
Normally sells for **£10**
Ended at **£15.87**



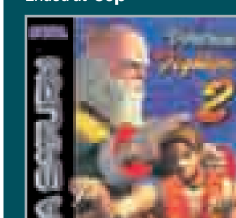
THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD
System: **Saturn**
Normally sells for **£35**
Ended at **£24.58**



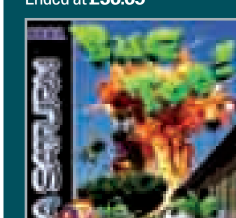
ATHLETE KINGS
System: **Saturn**
Normally sells for **£10**
Ended at **£4.78**



VIRTUA FIGHTER 2
System: **Saturn**
Normally sells for **£2**
Ended at **50p**



BUG TOO!
System: **Saturn**
Normally sells for **£23**
Ended at **£36.65**



retro GAMER

NEXT ISSUE

ON SALE 11 SEPTEMBER 2008

LOAD 55

Save the humans!

DEFENDER

EUGENE JARVIS CREATED SOME OF THE MOST ICONIC BLASTERS OF THE EIGHTIES. JOIN HIM AS HE DISCUSSES THE CREATION OF **DEFENDER** IN AN EXCLUSIVE NEW INTERVIEW.

MORE EXCITING FEATURES

» We look at one of gaming's earliest handheld systems, Nintendo's Game & Watch, and examine how its legacy is still being felt today.

» With a brand new version currently doing the rounds on Xbox Live Arcade and part *IV* now readily available, Namco reveals how it brought the arcade hit *Soul Calibur* to Sega's Dreamcast.

» Sandy White, the legendary creator of *Ant Attack* looks back at his cult classic and explains how he would adapt it for a new audience if it was released today.



RETRO DIRECTORY

EVERY MONTH, RETRO GAMER WILL BE LISTING ITS FAVOURITE WEBSITES AND INTERVIEWING SOME OF THEIR KEY MEMBERS. THIS ISSUE WE SPEAK TO MALCOLM LAURIE, FOUNDER OF THE BRILLIANT SHMUPS.COM WEBSITE

THE RETRO GAMER DIRECTORY

ATARI AGE
www.atariage.com
Excellent resource site dedicated to all aspects of Atari gaming.

ATARI ORG
www.atari.org
Another superb Atari site with every machine from the 2600 to arcade classics.

AUSSIE ARCADE
www.aussiearcade.com.au
A fantastic arcade forum catering for an Aussie audience.

CPC ZONE
www.cpczone.net
Excellent site for the Amstrad range of computers with all the latest news and reviews.

C64 GAME ENDINGS
www.c64endings.co.uk/
Over 260 endings for classic and not so classic C64 games.

LEMON64
www.lemon64.com
Superb Commodore 64 site filled with insightful reviews and a friendly forum.

LEMON AMIGA
www.lemonamiga.com
This great Amiga site is run by Kim Lemon, owner of Lemon 64.

MAC RETRO
www.macretro.tk
Getting emulators up and running on the Mac, this is a brilliant site.

NEO-GEO.COM
www.neo-geo.com
Dedicated to SNK's systems, but with lots of other stuff to enjoy.

WEEKEND GAMER
www.weekend-gamer.co.uk
Great site that covers a range of topics, from TV to gaming.

SYSTEM16
www.system16.com
Sega focused, but also dedicated to covering as many arcade games as possible.

NTSC-UK
http://ntsc-uk.domino.org/
This site is devoted to imports, but there's a retro section with useful advice on rare imports.

OLD-COMPUTERS.COM
http://old-computers.com
If you think the 2600 is ancient, visit this fascinating site.



When did you set Shmups.com up?
Malcolm Laurie: Back in 1997, I searched for shmups, and got four hits. Nobody even used the word any more since the *Zzap!64* days so I decided to resurrect it. It's now 11 years later and Shmups.com is still here!

Why did you decide to base it around shoot-'em-ups as opposed to other genres?
ML: It's a love affair that began with *Galaxian* for me. Shmups offer everything I like in a game: ten-minute slices of intense gameplay that can be replayed over decades perfecting your reflexes and technique. You can meld with the controls, get in that zone where it's just you versus the machine, achieving a mental state where you are fully tooled up and feel unstoppable. Shmups excel at providing that rush I crave. I just don't have the patience for 50-hour epics, I like something involving adrenalin and skill and since I can't stand fighting games, it had to be shoot-'em-ups.

What gives Shmups the edge over similar sites?
ML: There's an old-fashioned, hand-built review system. I'm tired of that cookie-cutter review style you see on major gaming sites, plastered with ads, written by people who don't even like shmups. I try to showcase a title, showing weapon systems, deep mechanics, play tips and techniques, hidden bits to look out for, and a level-by-level account of what to expect, and encourage similar depth from any contributors.

> "SHMUPS PROVIDE A RUSH. I LIKE GAMES INVOLVING ADRENALIN AND SKILL"

What's the most popular part of the site?
ML: The forum by far, courtesy of James Greenhalgh who's taken it to another level entirely. Together with a crack team of mods, he runs possibly the best online shoot-'em-up resource out there. The amount of info gathered on old and new shoot-'em-ups is incredible. There's a trading station, strategic gameplay articles, lots of news, high-score posting and intelligent discussion from thousands of well-informed members.

How can our readers contribute?
ML: Join the forum! Write reviews too – I'd really like some later Eighties arcade ones, as well as some obvious holes being filled on more recent titles. It's great when I receive reviews of amazing games I had missed… I get a bit concerned if I don't know about every shmup out there! I always have a backlog, but all reviews go up eventually.

What's your favourite shmup and why?
ML: *UFO Robo Dangar* by Nichibutsu. I adored *Terra Cresta*, so when this came out in 1986 I was blown away. Fab upgrades, black holes to other dimensions and a thumping tune, which I still hum today. I used to play it in the Treasure Island arcade in Glasgow, with another player who was just that bit better than me. We'd silently take turns, and squeeze our way further into it. If I could only take him on today, I'm bloody good at it now. That competitive element is something I was always drawn to, and am still obsessed with. This high-scoring slant has been largely lost in other genres, but even in the very latest shoot-'em-ups, it's a major factor. Sadly Nichibutsu abandoned shmup-making in favour of dodgy mah-jong games years ago.

DEEPER LOOK – WEBSITE OF THE MONTH

Shmups.com
www.shmups.com

Regulars will know that we're huge fans of the shoot-'em-up genre, so it's about time that we gave Shmups.com the adulation it so obviously deserves.

Now over a decade old, Malcolm Laurie's excellent site has in-depth reviews, a great database of shooters and a passion for its subject that few other sites can match.

The greatest part of Shmups.com is its brilliant forum. Most members are friendly, have a real hunger for the genre and are keen to share their knowledge with newcomers. With its high-score section, a great trading folder and genuine love for the genre, Shmups.com should be visited by anyone who ever felt a need to blow something into tiny pixels.



THE RETRO GAMER DIRECTORY

RACKET BOY
http://racketboy.com/
There's a definite Sega slant to Racket Boy, but it's a lot of fun.

RADIO SEGA
www.radiosega.net
If you're a fan of Sega music you'll love Radio Sega.

SEGA-16.COM
www.sega-16.com
Mega Drive site with some incredibly in-depth interviews.

RETRO101
www.retro101.co.uk has
It's fairly new, but Retro101 has some informative articles.

RETRO GAMING RADIO
www.monroeworld.com
Superb monthly podcast that looks at the US game market.

RLLMUK FORUM
www.rllmukforum.com/index.php
All the latest games and a retro section with helpful members.

THE RUBBER BEERMAT
http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/themanor33/TRBv2/
Excellent Spectrum site that champions a lot of rare games.

SHOOT THE CORE
www.shootthecore.moonpod.com
This excellent site loves shmups of all descriptions.

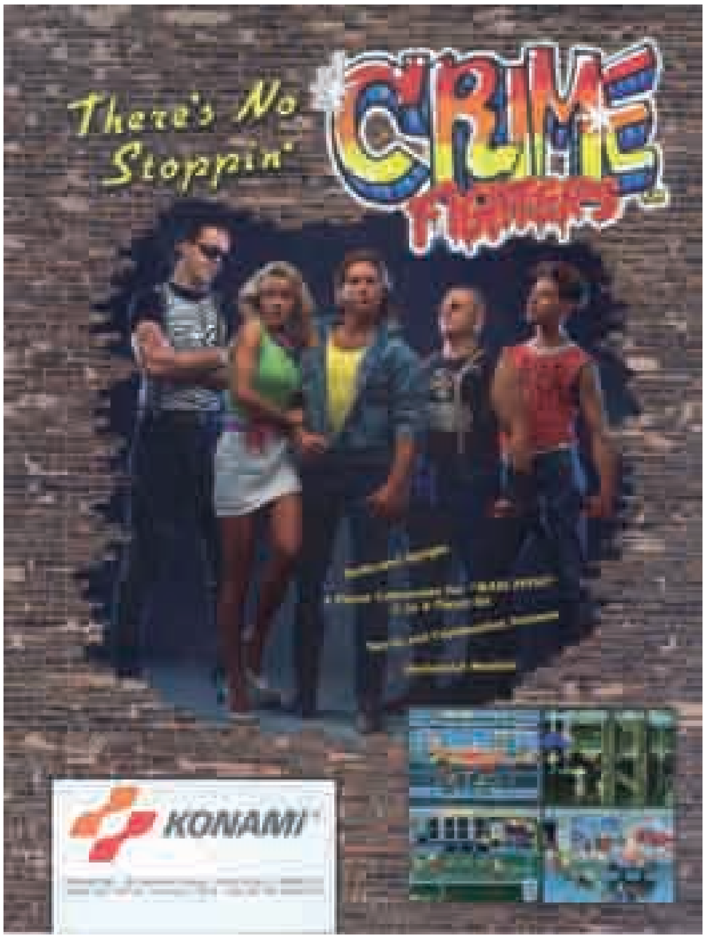
SHMUPS
www.shmups.com
Absolutely amazing website dedicated to the best gaming genre of all time.

VIDEOGAME MUSEUM
www.vgmuseum.com
Screenshots, game endings, cover scans, and reviews.

THE VIRTUAL CONSOLE ARCHIVE
www.vc-reviews.com
Your one-stop shop for everything VC-related.

WORLD OF SPECTRUM
www.worldofspectrum.org
Superb Spectrum site that offers a friendly forum.

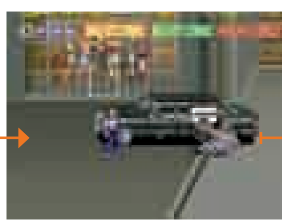
If you want to add your website to our expanding directory, please contact Darran at darran.jones@imagine-publishing.co.uk.

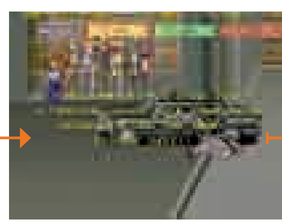


CRIME FIGHTERS

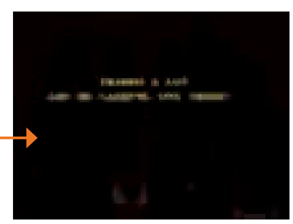
A game where you play an undercover cop trying to save a group of scantily clad teenage girls from a crime boss. Yes, it's about as imaginative as chocolate spread, but look, it has a cool ending. Here it is











SCREEN 1
So you've reached the last hurdle, and upping the ante of scantily clad women to liberate in a beat-'em-up is Konami's *Crime Fighters*. Check it, 15 girlies looking for a hero to carry them off into the sunset…

SCREEN 2
Right, this is how it's going to go down sunshine: we're going to put a bullet in each of your Achilles tendons, and you have ten seconds to get in your crappy car and drive off and never come back. You got that punk?

SCREEN 3
Sorry pal, you lose. Now let's get those girls outta there. Eh, what's this really annoying piece of yellow text saying, something about a secret bonus level if we're sad jerks and watch the credits roll to the end? As if.

SCREEN 4
And here we are with our harem of women. Or are those the images of the staff? We're confused, we need answers. Girl at the front seems keen. Maybe this is where our bonus stage comes in eh (nudge nudge, wink wink).

SCREEN 5
Ah sod it, we couldn't be arsed so we skipped to the end and were greeted by this concerned message from a worried developer. Cheers Konami, we'll be sure to watch our backs. Thanks for the good times, it's been emotional.